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A BOOK OF THE CHRIST CHILD



ELEANOR H. BROADUS

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A BOOK OF
THE CHRIST CHILD



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BY

ELEANOR HAMMOND BROADUS

WITH SIXTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS IN COLOR
FROM PAINTINGS BY THE OLD MASTERS

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TO

K. H. B.

PREFACE

THIS group of legends of the Christ Child has been written with no desire to give religious instruction, but rather to present picturesque material which is comparatively unfamiliar in a Protestant country. These legends, which had their inception in the religious fervor of early Christianity, are recorded mainly in the *Apocrypha*, in mediæval saints' lives, in mediæval art, and in popular tradition. The writer has used the outline of the stories as they exist in the old records, but has treated the details with freedom. The narratives of the Nativity and the Coming of the Magi, as based on the *Apocrypha*, have been included, not because the apocryphal material will bear comparison with that of the authentic gospels, but because these legends have a simplicity and picturesqueness which, as it appealed in former times to religious enthusiasts, to poets, to artists, and to the people, may also find a hearing to-day. Whether one accept the events or not, the symbolism which was true in ancient times remains true to-day; and, though using the material freely, the writer has tried to remain faithful to the spirit of reverence and ideality which was the mainspring of the original legends.

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And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

Saint Luke, II. 8–14.

CHRIST, THE CHILD

THE PASSING OF THE GODS

(From the *Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity*)

No war, or battail's sound,
Was heard the world around;
The idle spear and shield were high uphung;
The hookèd chariot stood,
Unstained with hostile blood;
The trumpet spake not to the armèd throng;
And Kings sat still with awful eye
As if they surely knew their sovran Lord was by.

* * * * *

The Oracles are dumb;
No voice or hideous hum
Runs through the archèd roof in words deceiving.
Apollo from his shrine
Can no more divine,
With hollow shriek the steep of Delphos leaving.
No nightly trance, or breathèd spell,
Inspires the pale-eyed Priest from the prophetic cell.

THE PASSING OF THE GODS

The lonely mountains o'er,
And the resounding shore,
A voice of weeping heard and loud lament;
From haunted spring, and dale
Edgèd with poplar pale,
The parting Genius is with sighing sent;
With flower-inwoven tresses torn
The Nymphs in twilight shade of tangled thickets mourn.

JOHN MILTON.

THE NEW ALTAR

In Rome and throughout her many provinces the people were rejoicing. The wars which had been waged for as long as anyone living could remember were suddenly ended. All the nations of the world were at peace, and in Rome a temple had been built to mark the event. The very gods seemed to rejoice with mortals, for Apollo had listened to a question asked by the Roman Emperor—"How long will the Temple of Peace endure?"—and through the lips of his priestess at Delphi had given an answer, puzzling as the answers of the oracle always were, but to the confident Romans meaning that peace would endure forever. And, therefore, during the days of rejoicing, while the first sacrifices were being offered in the newly built temple, the Emperor Augustus caused this inscription to be carved above the marble pillars—THE ETERNAL TEMPLE OF PEACE.

No other emperor had ruled a whole world at peace,

and to Augustus's subjects this fact seemed divinely ordered. They looked upon their ruler as a god, and wished to pay him the honors due a deity. But in his palace on the hill the Emperor hesitated to receive such homage. Strange prophecies were sounding in his ears. One greater than Augustus, greater than Apollo, greater than all the gods was yet to come. Augustus sent for the sibyl, the aged prophetess who lived on the banks of the Tiber, and questioned her about this prince, this god, who was to rule.

Out into the darkness of the palace gardens the sibyl led the Emperor. All the great city slept. So still it was that they could hear the waters of the Tiber moving below them. The sky was black, but the Emperor, following the sibyl's bidding, looked toward the east and saw a faint glow spreading in the heavens.

"It is not near the time of dawn," cried the Emperor. "What means this light?"

"It is not light of sun or moon or stars," whispered the sibyl. "Be silent and look."

The light widened into a great circle that ringed the

eastern sky, and within the circle appeared a fair young woman holding in her arms a little child.

"Behold the First-born Son of God," cried the sibyl.

The Emperor gazed in silent wonder. Then the vision slowly faded; and when Augustus turned to question the sibyl further, she had disappeared.

Again the Emperor sent messengers to Delphi to ask over what regions this son of God would rule. The little band of Romans, trusted officers and soldiers, made their way across the sea, up the rocky passes to the temple on the mountain. They found the oracle silent and deserted.

"Apollo is dead," they whispered to one another with awestruck faces.

Down the slopes they went again. The old world of pagan Greece seemed suddenly to have grown bleak and sunless. The woodland altars which they passed stood neglected; the shepherds no longer piped on the hillsides; the very trees stood silent in the breathless air. In the valley they hailed a youth walking along the way.

"Are all the gods deserting the fair land of Greece?" asked the Emperor's messengers.

"The gods are no more," answered the youth. "The nymphs of forest and stream are gone, and the oreads have fled from the mountains, and fleeing they cried, 'Great Pan is dead.'"

The Romans passed on to the seashore, and on the voyage back to Italy the sailors told them strange tales.

"On a night not far past," said they, "as we sailed eastward, the wind suddenly failed. The water was still. Sea birds were silent. Our oars hung suspended in mid-air, and our hands could not move. Across the waters came a cry, 'Great Pan is dead.' Then the winds blew again, our oars were released, and we sailed on. What think ye of these portents?"

The Romans looked at one another. Finally one answered: "The gods are dead. But the Emperor hath seen a vision in the sky. A new god comes, greater than the old."

Returning to Rome, the messengers spoke before the



Emperor: "Apollo is silent. The gods of Greece are dead."

And the Emperor replied: "The Temple of Peace, which we called Eternal, hath fallen while ye were absent. A new deity is lord of the world."

Thereupon Augustus raised an altar on the hill above which the vision of the Mother and Child had appeared. The shrine was dedicated to the First-born Son of God, and on the stone was inscribed ARA COELI, the Altar of Heaven.

And the First-born Son of God lay, a little child, in the manger at Bethlehem.

THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

(From the *Coventry Miracle Play of the Nativity*)

III. Pastor.[1]

Brethur, loke vp and behold!
Whatt thyng ys yondur thatt schynith soo bryght?
Asse long ase eyuer [2] I haue wachid my fold,
Yett sawe I neyuer soche a syght
In fyld.[3]
A ha! now ys cum the tyme that old fathurs hath told,
Thatt in the wynturs nyght soo cold
A chyld of meydyn [4] borne be he wold
In whom all profeciys schalbe fullfyld.

I. Pastor.

Truth yt ys with-owt naye,
Soo seyd the profett Isaye,
Thatt a chylde schuld be borne of a made soo bryght
In wentur ny the schortist dey
Or elis in the myddis of the nyght.

II. Pastor.

Loovid be God, most off myght,
That owre grace ys to see thatt syght;
Pray we to hym, ase hit ys right,
Yff thatt his wyll it be,
That we ma haue knoleyge of this syngnefocacion [5]
And why hit aperith on this fassion;
And eyuer to hym lett vs geve lawdacion,
In yerthe whyle thatt we be.

III. Pastor.

Harke! the(y) syng abowe in the clowdis clere!
Hard [6] I neyuer of soo myrre a quere.[7]
Now, gentyll brethur, draw we nere
To here there armonye.[8]

I. Pastor.

Brothur, myrth and solas ys cum hus among;
For be the swettnes of ther songe,
Goddis Sun ys cum, whom we haue lokid for long,
Asse syngnefyith thys star that we do see.

II. Pastor.

"*Glore, glorea in excelsis*," that wase there songe;
How sey ye, fellois, seyd the(y) not thus?

I. Pastor.

Thatt ys welseyd; now goo we hence
To worschipe that chyld of hy manyffecence,[9]
And that we ma syng in his presence
"*Et in tarra pax omynibus.*"

[1] shepherd [2] ever [3] field [4] maiden [5] signification
[6] heard [7] merry a choir [8] harmony [9] magnificence

THE CHILD IN THE MANGER

A man and a woman traveled slowly along a dusty road toward the city of Bethlehem, but night overtook them when they were still distant from the city.

"I can no longer see the way," said the man, turning to his wife, "and thou art too weary to risk wandering. Rest thou here while I go to the city to seek a lodging. Where can I safely leave thee?"

Even as he spoke a faint light appeared before them, coming nearer and nearer. Then a soft radiance showed a beautiful youth clothed in white, carrying a lantern in his hand. He took the bridle of the ass on which the woman was seated, and turning aside from the highway walked toward the low hills which bordered the road. He stopped at the entrance to a stable, a cave cut in the rock, and before the man could thank him for his timely guidance, the youth had vanished.

"What means it?" asked Joseph, as he helped his young wife to dismount.

"That the Lord is with us," she answered, and entered the stable cave.

Joseph went on toward the town to seek a better resting place to which on the morrow he might take his wife. Troubled, however, at leaving Mary unattended, he often looked back toward the cave, but in the darkness he could not distinguish it. All the stars were hidden. Though he could not see the path before him nor the trees beside the road, he could hear the rustling of leaves and the voices of travelers some distance ahead of him. He felt the cold night wind on his face, and wrapped his cloak more closely about him. In the distance a little fire was burning, a shepherd's fire, and in its glow Joseph could faintly distinguish the white figures of sheep moving about as they cropped the sparse grass of the hillside. He went slowly forward, guiding himself along the rough road with his long staff.

Suddenly the clouds parted, and Joseph saw a light drop



from heaven as if a star had fallen; but it did not go out in darkness. It passed into the cave, and there remained. As he gazed in wonder it seemed to him as if the radiance of a bright noontide were imprisoned there.

He turned back toward the light, but his feet would not move. He could no longer hear voices or rustling leaves; the sheep about the fire were motionless; the flames of the fire did not flicker in the wind; the wind had ceased. Astonished, awed, Joseph was aware that a great hush lay everywhere, as if Nature awaited in silence the coming of a new and marvelous thing. Then the stillness passed; the clouds were swept away and the stars shone out. Over the cave hung a star of wonderful beauty. Joseph returned to the cave and found that a little child had been born there and was lying in Mary's arms.

The cave was filled with light so that the far low corners under overhanging, jagged rocks were as bright as if the sun shone into them; and all the light came from the luminous form of the Child. The animals in the stable, an ox and an ass, were kneeling beside Him.

Joseph, in silent reverence, filled the manger with fresh hay; and as the Babe was laid in its humble cradle, the dry grass grew green again and the brown sanfoin, budding as if the summer were returning, put forth rose-colored blossoms which formed into a wreath and rested on the Child's head.

And ever the cave was filled with light, "greater," says an old writer, "than the light of lamps and candles, and greater than the light of the sun itself." It drew the gaze of the shepherds on the hillsides, who fearfully asked one another what these portents meant. For they, too, had felt the hush which fell upon all things; they, as well as Joseph, had peered into the darkness around them and seen the wonderful light shining—a clear light in a black world. And then the great star broke through the clouds, and the shepherds came through the cold night air to seek the meaning of the light in the familiar stable where one of their number had often kept his sheep and oxen.

The light grew more and more brilliant as they neared the cave entrance. From within issued soft and beautiful

music—the singing of a multitude of voices. The voices sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men."

In wonder the shepherds entered. About the cave, hiding its harsh stone walls, stood a company of angels, their great white wings touching above their heads. Some stood in adoration, with hands folded palm to palm; some played upon soft-toned instruments—harps, viols, lutes, and cymbals; some held golden censers, from which the incense rose; and the voices sang unceasingly, "Glory to God in the highest."

The shepherds came into the light and saw the Child lying in the manger. About His head the flowers blossomed, though it was winter in the land; from His face and hands and body fell the radiant light they had seen from afar. In awe they knelt beside the Child, but they could not speak.

The angel host, as if to leave the joy of service to the simple keepers of sheep, vanished. The light shone more softly from the manger. Then, at length, one of the shep-

herds spoke to the young mother. "It is cold here for thee and thy little one," he said, and, removing the soft fleece fastened across his shoulders, he gently covered the Child. The others quickly brought together dry wood and kindled a fire in the cave. Then, finding no more for their hands to do, they went back to their sheep on the hillside.

In the cave the Child slept, watched over by His mother and by Joseph, and heralded to the world by the great star.

THE SHEPHERDS' GIFTS

(From the *Coventry Miracle Play of the Nativity*)

I. Pastor.

Hayle, mayde-mothur and wyff soo myld!
Asse the angell seyd, soo haue we fonde.
I haue nothyng to present with thi chylde
But my pype;[1] hold, hold, take yt in thy hond;
Where-in moche pleysure that I haue fond;
And now, to oonowre[2] thy gloreose byrthe,
Thou schallt yt haue to make the myrthe.

II. Pastor.

Now, hayle be thow, chyld, and thy dame!
For in a pore loggyn[3] here art thow leyde,
Soe the angell seyde and told vs thy name;
Holde, take thow here my hat on thy hedde!
And now off won thyng thow art well sped,[4]
For weddur[5] thow hast noo nede to complayne,
For wynde, ne sun, hayle, snoo and rayne.

III. Pastor.

Hayle be thow, Lorde ouer watur and landis!
For thy cumyng all we ma make myrthe.
Haue here my myttens to pytt [6] on thi hondis,[7]
Othur treysure haue I non to present the with.

Mare.[8]

Now, herdmen hynd,
For youre comyng
To my chylde schall I prae,
Asse he ys heyvin kyng,
To grant you his blessyng,
And to hys blys that ye may wynd [9]
At your last day.

[1] shepherd's flute [2] honor [3] lodging [4] provided [5] weather
[6] put [7] hands [8] Mary [9] go



THREE KINGS OF ORIENT

Three caravans were encamped about their night fires among the hills of Palestine. The men did not keep apart, each to his own band, but mingled with one another in friendly intercourse as if, in spite of their differences of feature, of dress, and of language, their errand were a common one. Though by their weapons the men about the fires showed themselves to be soldiers, their talk was not of war; though they had been traveling along the highway with laden camels and asses, they did not talk of merchandise or markets; though they were passing through vast countries strange to all of them, they did not speak of the difficulties of the way or seek for guides.

Through one who knew the language of each they questioned one another, "Whence comest thou and whither dost thou go?" And in part the answer differed and in part it was the same. "We come from the land of Persia, beyond the Tigris," said one; and "Our country

stretches south of the Euphrates, and is called Arabia," said another; and a third said, "Along the Nile lies Egypt, our prince's kingdom." But in their several tongues they added, as if with one thought, "We follow the Star!"

About the fires they rested, talking of the events of their journeys and repeating the tales which were afloat about the camps concerning certain marvels which their leaders had seen.

"In our home land," said a young soldier whose dark skin showed him to be an Egyptian, "our leader, the young Prince Caspar, riding over the desert, came upon an ostrich egg of great size. As he looked he saw the shell open, and from within there appeared a lion and a lamb, and the two moved off together toward a spring beneath a palm tree. A priest of the great temple at Philæ hath interpreted this omen as heralding a time of peace for all the world when even the Romans will rest content with their conquests and trouble Egypt no more. Prince Caspar, therefore, did not fear to leave his country

when the star appeared in the east and beckoned him on this distant journey."

"A strange matter this," said an Arabian spearman; "but one stranger still occurred in the garden of the royal palace, where Balthazar, our king, walked in the cool of the day. Beyond the terraced walks of roses there grew a luxuriant vine whose flowers were small and of no beauty; but as King Balthazar neared it, he saw the petals of the dull white blossoms fall to the earth, and there sprang from the heavy foliage a great flower more beautiful than any rose, and its fragrance spread through the garden. Then from the heart of the flower there came a white dove, which flew toward the sunset and disappeared in the light. The King, who hath much wisdom, readeth the meaning of the portent thus: 'In the reign of the King, whose star we follow, the desert places of Arabia shall lose their barrenness and blossom even as the vine did in the garden, and among the happy springs of water our people shall dwell in joy and gladness; and the King shall be called the Prince of Peace.'

Therefore our king follows the leading of the Prince's Star."

Then spoke a Persian bowman: "Listen! To our old King Melchior was born a son who died almost at his birth. In his death hour the newborn son spoke to his royal father: 'Follow thou the Star. It will lead thee to the King of Kings whose kingdom shall know no end.' Then the child died, and the king ever searched the heavens. After many nights of watching, he saw shining in the sky three great stars, nay! three suns, which united into one, into yonder blazing light, and moved toward the region where now we march. Therefore King Melchior follows the Star."

Apart from the camp fires of the soldiery stood three large pavilions. Though the night was cold, the curtains at the entrance were drawn back as if the inmates wished constantly to look out upon the rocky slopes and the vast expanse of sky before them. In the middle pavilion sat three men talking quietly as if the important things had all been said.

"The three stars have called us three separately, and as they united into one so have we joined our bands together and are all of one mind—to seek the King whose birth is heralded by yonder star. Is it not thus, my brothers?" An old man of regal look was speaking. The other two, one middle aged, the other young, bowed assent.

With courteous leave-taking they separated; and soon, at words of command passed among the resting soldiers, the caravans abandoned the fires and took up the march, their three royal leaders at the head.

Following the beacon star they reached the capital of Judea, and halting, the three kings questioned the guard at the gate.

"Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" they asked. "His star hath led us hither and we come to greet him."

The guard answered, "King Herod hath no young son. Ye seek Herod himself, perhaps."

So King Melchior and King Balthazar and Prince Caspar, in jeweled garments, with crowns upon their heads,

went with a stately retinue to the palace in Jerusalem, and there they were received by King Herod. In answer to Herod's question the three told him of the portents seen in their own countries and of the star which they had followed, believing it to be the herald of a great king's birth—a king to whom all others would yield homage, and whose boundless kingdom would know neither war nor famine nor any disaster.

Herod scoffed at their portents and at their belief in the meaning of the star. As they sat at table served from gold and silver and attended by many servants, the King of Judea said proudly, "There is no king of the Jews but Herod. Your tales are as believable as that this roasted cock lying in the dish before us should rise and crow." Suddenly the cock became freshly feathered, and standing before Herod, crowed thrice.

Then King Herod, troubled, sent to his priests and wisemen, and they told him of old prophecies which said that in Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, should be born a ruler for all Israel. The three kings, Caspar, Balthazar, and

Melchior, encouraged by the discovery of the prophecies, took leave of King Herod. But he, planning in his evil mind to find the young prince, the future usurper of his throne, and secretly to put him to death, bade the travelers return to him when they had found the royal child, so that he also might go to worship him.

The caravans started once more at dusk, going southward from the royal city of Herod. The peaceful bands wound along the rough roads in the cold night, and the star-led monarchs ever expected the ending of the journey and the presence of the King.

At last the star seemed to sink toward earth. The kings, in royal dress, rode forward alone. The star still moved before them, and so close were they that the jewels in their crowns and on their robes reflected its clear light in myriad colors. Then at the edge of the town the star rested above a stable cut in the rocks and there it hung.

The kings halted.

"Can a king dwell here?" cried the Egyptian Caspar.

"Speak not doubtingly," answered the white-haired Mel-

chior. "A young child must rest within, and he must be the King. The star has led us, and the fires of heaven cannot lie."

Dismounting, the three kings entered the cave together, and there in a soft radiance of light they saw a young child sitting on its mother's knee. They paused a moment, glancing at the rude surroundings—the cold walls, the stalls, the manger bed.

Then spoke Balthazar softly to Melchior, "We who have worn the diadem these many years know that true kingship is of the soul and that it rules the souls of others."

"Yea, 'tis the fire of heaven in the heart," answered Melchior. "What matters the gleam of jewels in the crown?"

"The King summons us," said Caspar, watching the Child and held by its strange majesty. "Let us go forward."

Advancing toward the manger throne, with understanding in their hearts, they knelt and laid their crowns and their gifts at the Child's feet.



"O King of Kings," said Caspar fervently, "behold! Egypt lays her gold at Thy feet. Do Thou rule us."

And Balthazar, opening a costly jar of frankincense, said, "Thou God Child, whose star doth bring light and peace to the world, the incense of Arabia burns before Thee."

"Thou Redeemer of mankind," said Melchior, "suffering for the sins of the world, Persia would embalm Thee in her heart." And he laid a box of myrrh before his new-found Savior.

Lifting a hand in blessing, the Child said, "My peace I give unto you." At the sound of His voice the three bowed their heads to the earth, knowing in their hearts that a new King reigned.

In the dawn, when they left the stable and would have returned to Herod, the star moved southward and led them home by another way.

Upon their return the three monarchs laid aside their crowns and renounced their kingships, and going together

into a far country they carried the message of the coming of the Prince of Peace. In this work they lived their lives, and one by one they died. They slept together on a mountain top, as if they wished still to be near the stars, and for many hundreds of years they rested there.

Then came a time when their message of peace was forgotten, and warring nations crossed and recrossed the mountain, and the bones of the three messengers of the Christ Child were moved from place to place. At length an emperor from the West came and carried the ashes of the three Eastern kings to his distant city, and laid them in a shrine of gold and jewels as befitted their royal station. The shrine was placed in a beautiful church, the great cathedral in Cologne, and above it stood an image of the young Prince of Peace, the babe whom they had worshiped at the manger in far-off Bethlehem. And there in the cathedral rests the shrine to-day within the vision of those who still spread the message of peace first carried by the three kings of Orient.

THE PLAINT OF THE WOMEN

(From the *Coventry Miracle Play of the Nativity*)

Lully, lulla, thow littell tyne child,
By by, lully, lullay, thow littell tyne child,
By by, lully, lullay!

O sisters too,
How may we do
For to preserve this day
This pore yongling
For whom we do singe
By by, lully, lullay?

Herod, the king,
In his raging,
Chargid he hath this day
His men of might
In his owne sight
All yonge children to slay,—

THE PLAINT OF THE WOMEN

That wo is me,
Pore child, for thee,
And ever morne and may
For thi parting
Nether say nor singe,
By by, lully, lullay.

THE FLIGHT OF THE CHILD

Herod was jealous of a little child. Wise men from the East had come to seek a new-born king, and this king, so said Herod's councilors, lay a helpless baby in his mother's arms in the little town of Bethlehem. Herod had commanded his soldiers to find and kill the child; but an angel had carried the warning, and the child was secretly hurried away from Herod's wrath by Joseph and Mary.

Along rough paths, across stony hills the fugitives went in the darkness, Joseph afoot, leading an ass on which Mary rode with the child in her arms. To Joseph and the Mother it seemed as if they could hear hoof beats behind them, and the clash of swords against armor as soldiers galloped in pursuit. In the darkness back of them lay Bethlehem marked only by the red fire on its walls. Before them lay the weary and dangerous road into Egypt, away from Herod's power. Fearfully they hurried on. And the Babe whose coming had been heralded by stars and by angels,

whose advent was welcomed by the great of the earth—a fugitive now in the solitudes of the bare hills, unmindful both of glory and of danger—slept beneath His Mother's mantle as they pushed on through the night.

When the dawn came, the weary Joseph was leading his family across a fertile plain. In the daylight they had even less hope of escape than in the darkness, for they would be seen by men working in the fields whom the soldiers, as they passed, would not fail to question. To one of these husbandmen, who was sowing seed, the Virgin Mother appealed.

"If a soldier question thee," she said, "about those who have gone this way, say that thou didst see us pass thy field when thou wast sowing thy seed."

"Yea," he answered bluntly, "I see thee and thy husband and thy child on the road, and I sow my seed."

The little family hurried on.

The husbandman went to his house for food, and returning again to his work saw that the seed, planted but a few minutes before, had sprouted, matured, turned golden for



the harvesting. As he felt the heavy ears of grain, amazed at the quick and abundant yield, two soldiers rode up, drew rein, and called to him from the highway.

"Hast thou seen fugitives pass this way, an old man, a young woman, and a child?"

"Yea," answered the husbandman, standing waist deep in waving golden grain; "I saw such pass as I was sowing the seed in this field."

"Then thou didst see them many suns ago," cried the soldier impatiently. "Thou hast not seen those whom we require, thou dullard. They fled from Bethlehem but yesternight."

The soldiers turned back, leaving the man still gazing over his field of ripe grain, while beyond the plain, among the woodlands, the fugitives again sought safety from others of Herod's soldiers.

In the woodland path, hearing the sound of pursuing horses, Joseph led his charges aside beneath a juniper tree. As they came within its shade the branches bent low about them, the small twigs twined together in a close network,

and the needles filled in the spaces between so closely that the three were in a twilight gloom. Herod's guard dashed past, looking to right and left; but they saw only pine and juniper trees. The rapid beat of the horses' hoofs died away in the distance, and again the Divine Child was borne on in safety.

But had the soldiers been following as the fugitives passed out from the woodland beyond the borders of Herod's province, they had not failed to find them. The sandy wastes which now the Mother and Child were traversing burst into bloom behind them, and their path was marked with bright flowers. Winding across the hot sands from one oasis to another, the flower-bordered path seemed to pass through the green islands of palm trees and link them together as slender threads of gold pass through gleaming jewels and hold them in a fair chain.

And as the desert had been conscious of the presence of its Creator, and had sent forth blossoms to greet Him, even though He lay a little Child in His Mother's arms, so, too, the trees acknowledged Him, bowing before the God Child

as He was carried among them. All the trees in the scattered valleys did obeisance to Him except the aspen. Haughtily erect, it would not bow before the little Child traveling humbly past it; but the Child looked upon the proud tree, and the aspen began to tremble, and in its guilt it trembles still. For though all other trees of the forest may stand motionless when the winds are silent, the aspen leaves quiver and the tree bows its head, remembering that God is ever present.

The palm trees especially befriended the travelers as they directed their way from one oasis to another across the desert. In the cool shade the Holy Family would rest; and once, as they waited until the fierce sun should sink toward its setting, the palm tree under which they sat moved its leafy crown with the sun and hung its great leaves as a curtain between the weary three and the blazing sky. Another time as they sat beneath a palm, Mary wished for some of the fruit which grew at the top. But the stem of the tree was tall and smooth, and Joseph said regretfully: "I cannot climb. My age and my weariness prevent me.

Would that instead of the high-hanging fruit we might find a spring of cold water near at hand."

Then the Child Jesus, running from His Mother toward the tree, raised His arms and cried, "Bend thy lofty crown, O palm tree, that My Mother's longing may be satisfied."

At His words the tree bent its tall slender stem until the leaves swept the sand, and Mary plucked the fruit and the weary travelers ate. When they had finished, Jesus spoke again to the tree, "Raise thyself, O palm tree, and bring forth fruit again that others passing here may eat and be refreshed." The tree straightened itself and again its long leaves swayed above them; and Jesus, stooping at the foot of the palm, scooped a little hollow with His hand. From the hollow a spring gushed forth, and they drank of the cold water; and being refreshed went once more upon their way.

Wild beasts, too, became their friends. From a cave where the travelers paused for shelter, rushed forth fierce creatures of the desert intent to devour the helpless wanderers. But as the Holy Child, slipping down from His



Mother's lap, approached them, they crouched before Him, and He laid His arm about their necks. Joseph and Mary, looking on, recalled the prophecy made of old, "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them."

From men, too, they suffered nothing. Though they fell into the hands of a band of robbers, the captain's evil heart was touched by a majesty in the Child which compelled kindness and love, and the robber chieftain gently led the captives to his stronghold among the rugged hills, and there he and his wife cared for them until the three were ready to continue their journey.

Befriended by men and beasts and trees, by the very sands of the desert, the Holy Family came at last into Egypt and to a great city. Here, as strangers were wont to do, they sought shelter in a temple.

The temple stood apart from the little dwelling houses of the town, stretching across the sands, vast and gloomy. The dark-hued Egyptians passed in its shadow, looking with

lazy interest at the three dusty travelers who approached its entrance. Joseph and Mary and the Child entered between the great painted pillars into the cool twilight within. Statues of the Egyptian gods stood on either side of the vast hall, where they had stood for untold centuries. So great were the statues that the three who walked among them seemed like tiny children looking up toward towering hills of stone. But as the Child passed before the images like a beam of sunlight in the dim hall, the great statues of the gods fell from their bases, and the image of Ra, the mightiest of the deities, crumbled into fragments. The Child walked on silently over the dust of the gods of Egypt.

The people in the streets heard a noise as of thunder from within the temple, and ran in fear to the ruler of the city. He came with soldiers and found the temple gates crumbling, the pillars broken, the statues lying on the floor, mere heaps of broken stone. Through the shattered roof the bright sunlight pierced and fell radiantly about the Child who lay asleep by the broken statue of Ra.

THE DAWN OF PEACE

(From the *Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity*)

But peaceful was the night
Wherein the Prince of Light
His reign of peace upon the earth began.
The winds with wonder whist,
Smoothly the waters kissed,
Whispering new joys to the mild Ocean,
Who now hath quite forgot to rave
While birds of calm sit brooding on the charmèd wave.

The stars, with deep amaze
Stand fixed in steadfast gaze,
Bending one way their precious influence,
And will not take their flight,
For all the morning light,
Or Lucifer that often warned them thence;
But in their glimmering orbs did glow,
Until their Lord Himself bespake, and bid them go.

JOHN MILTON.

THE BOY OF NAZARETH

Beside the doorway of a small house, close by the wall where the sunbeams fell, a little boy was playing, and singing as he played. In the open doorway sat a woman spinning; from a workshop beside the house came the noise of hammer and saw; and the mingled sounds gave token of a humble family earning their daily bread.

Presently the noise in the shop ceased and a man came out, white haired and bent, and sat down wearily on the doorstep.

"Is thy day's work finished at last?" asked the woman in a sweet and gentle voice.

"Nay, Mary," answered the man, "it is not finished. The work has gone badly and the chair is ruined. It will be a great loss to us, for the rich Titus does not understand failure or forgive it, and I—I grow too old for skillful work."

"Do not be downcast, my Joseph," Mary urged. "Per-

haps the faults can be mended in the morning when thou art feeling fresher and stronger. Thou art weary now from the long, hot day."

"The chair is quite ruined," he said slowly. "Come, and thou wilt see."

The two crossed the open space and disappeared into the workshop, leaving the little one at His play. His hands, outstretched, were catching the sunbeams which gleamed from His fingers like rainbow bands or lay imprisoned wherever He placed them—on flowers and stones and sand. But seeing the troubled faces of His parents, He tossed His bright playthings on the flowers beside the wall, and followed into the workshop. His bare feet made no noise as He came across the stone floor, and silently He stood behind them.

"Thou seest," Joseph was saying, "that through my clumsy work these pieces do not fit. I have cut them too short, and no wood such as this can be found in all Judea. It was brought for Titus from the northern hills. How I can pay him for spoiling his costly wood I know not."

Mary stood silent, sorrowful, but knowing no remedy for Joseph's trouble. Joseph threw the ill-cut timbers on his bench.

"But the chair is not spoiled," said the Child's voice as He came forward. "It is a beautiful chair, my father. Do thou lay yonder pieces where they belong."

"Thou dost not understand, dear Child," said Joseph, turning toward Him. "See, my Jesus, they are much too short."

He placed the pieces on the half-finished chair, and they lacked several inches of the needed length. But the little Jesus took one end as Joseph held the other, and as the man and the woman looked on in wonder, the pieces lengthened under the Child's touch and fitted into their places.

Jesus clapped His hands together joyfully. "Is it not a beautiful chair? Titus, too, will say it is beautiful, and strangers will marvel at it in his great palace. Let us finish it now," He added, slipping His hand into Joseph's and laying His fair head against the man's arm.

Joseph picked up his hammer and, working with renewed energy and confidence, fixed the last pieces firmly in their places; then, straightening his bent back, he looked with satisfaction and thankfulness upon his finished work.

Jesus stood beside him and passed His little hands over the smooth wood. And the wood took on a new rich color, and on the broad arms and high back flowers and foliage appeared, wrought in the hard material by the caressing touch of the Child's fingers. And then, while Joseph carried home the well-fashioned chair, Mary again sat spinning in the open door, and Jesus went back to His play.

Day after day the Child played in the shade of the house or by a little stream at the foot of the garden slope, sometimes alone, sometimes with the village boys. Once, as a group of them played together by the water, they took the wet clay on the banks and molded it into the forms of animals and birds. There were oxen and asses and sheep and camels and birds—all the kinds that they knew; and sometimes the awkward figures would stand upright, but

more often they tumbled down clumsily so that the children must begin their work all over again. But the best ones they set aside to harden in the sun, and they came again the next day, which was the Sabbath, to play with the finished toys. A few sheep which the boys had made and some sparrows fashioned by Jesus stood firm and hard on the sunny ledge.

"Let us take our flocks to the stream to drink," said one of the boys.

"And let us play," said Jesus eagerly, "that they can walk about the slopes and that they will come to us when we call."

So they took the earthen sheep and birds to the edge of the stream; but as soon as the clay was moistened by the water it softened and fell apart. But Jesus, who had placed His flock of sparrows beside the sheep, cried quickly, before the water could hurt them, "Come hither, my birds!" and the sparrows molded by the Child's hands moved and fluttered to His feet.

The other boys shouted with amazement.

"Let us make a safer stream for them," said Jesus, intent on His play.

Taking a stick He marked deep grooves in the moist clay, and water began to flow through the little channels. But as the water was muddy from the freshly dug earth, Jesus put His hand into the rivulet and followed the current with His finger, and the water grew so clear that the watching boys could see pebbles and white sand at the bottom. Jesus called His sparrows to the new-made stream, and they came and drank, dipping their beaks deep into the clear pools.

As the boys sat under the trees watching the strange birds move about at the command of their playfellow, a man came toward them frowning at their merriment. He called out harshly and reproved them for their play on the Sabbath. Jesus sat quite still and the birds became as rigid as when they were first fashioned.

"These images which ye make must be destroyed," the man cried, as he began to trample on the clay birds. "Such play profaneth the holy Sabbath."



But Jesus spread His hands over the sparrows and said, "Fly away, my sparrows! Fly away to the tree tops!" And the sparrows flew away on light wings and hid themselves among the leaves.

The boys, wondering but half afraid of their companion's power, went to their homes, while the man spread strange stories through the town.

On another day Jesus and His playmates were together beside the highway talking beneath the trees. Few men passed by in the heat—a man with asses bearing produce from his farm, a traveler or two bent on business in the town, a group of Roman soldiers on horseback with helmets and swords glittering in the sunlight.

"They are Cæsar's men," said one of the boys. "Would not the sight of the Emperor on his golden throne with his soldiers about him be a proud sight?"

"Let us play Cæsar and his soldiers," cried another. "I will be captain of the guard."

"Nay," cried a third, "if thou, the oldest, art captain of the guard, who will be the emperor?"

With a common impulse they turned toward the youngest among them, the boy Jesus, who lay beneath the trees looking up dreamily into the cool foliage.

"Come," they called to Him, "Thou art to be our king and we Thy soldiers."

They broke off branches from the trees, and making a rude throne of them, placed Jesus upon it. One boy brought a long leaf from a palm tree and placed it in the play king's hand for a scepter, while others gathered flowers from the field behind them and crowned Him with bright lilies. Under a canopy of leaves the little king ruled His happy kingdom.

The boys, playing that they were a conquering army returning from foreign lands, laughingly waylaid the occasional passer-by and made him come as captive to bow before their king. Their first prisoner was a young shepherd, and as the boys dragged him before Jesus, they cried, "Behold, O Cæsar, we bring captive a prince of Egypt."

The shepherd entering into the play, knelt and held out

his hands as if offering tribute or ransom; but the little king waved it aside, saying, "Egypt paid her tribute of gold long ago. Go in peace to thy own land."

Then the boys with childish gravity led the shepherd to the road again and released him, and he went on his way.

As others passed, the boys surrounded them also, and stopped them. "Come and pay tribute to Cæsar," they cried to a sturdy farmer and a camel driver who came that way.

"Behold, O King," they said, leading their prisoners to the leafy throne, "we bring captive the kings of Arabia and Persia."

"Release your captives," said the young soldiers' monarch, "and send them honorably home. Arabia and Persia have paid their service and will work our will in their own kingdom."

The farmer and the camel driver laughed at the boys' play and continued their interrupted journey.

Next there passed a man and a woman who were weep-

ing, and they carried on a rude litter a boy who was ill and dying; but unmindful of their grief the boys stopped the two, and forced them to set down their burden and come before the king.

Jesus quickly laid down His scepter as He saw them, and asked, "Why weep ye?"

"Our son has been bitten by a serpent yonder among the rocks. He dies and we carry him home. Thou and Thy companions do not well to hinder us."

"We will help, not hinder," answered the Christ Child going to the litter.

He uncovered the boy and saw the injured hand and arm swollen from the serpent's poison. The youth's face was ashen. Gently the young Christ touched him and spoke to him, and straightway the boy was healed.

"Who is your king?" asked the father and mother, turning to the boys and watching Jesus as He stood apart with their son.

"He is Jesus, the son of Joseph, a carpenter in Nazareth," they answered. Then, turning toward Him,

half playfully, half seriously, they led Jesus, the son of Joseph, to His throne and crowned Him again with the lily crown and placed the palm-branch scepter in His hand.

THE CHRIST CHILD AND THE SAINTS

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Ah! dearest Jesus, Holy Child,
Make Thee a bed, soft, undefil'd,
Within my heart, that it may be
A quiet chamber kept for Thee.
My heart for very joy doth leap,
My lips no more can silence keep,
I too must sing, with joyful tongue,
That sweetest ancient cradle song,
"Glory to God in highest Heaven,
Who unto man His Son hath given."
While angels sing, with pious mirth,
A glad New Year to all the earth.

MARTIN LUTHER.

THE PLAYMATE

A little child played alone in a quiet garden. From the hillsides came faint tinkles of sheep bells; in the trees overhead sounded the delicate notes of birds, and on the high garden walls the crickets chirruped. A faint breeze moved the tree tops, rustling the leaves and wafting about the garden the scent of almond blossoms. Petals of magnolia and jasmine floated down on the child, who smiled as she laid them in her mimic house of sand. But as silent as the wind-blown blossoms the little child moved about in her gentle play.

The shadows in the garden grew longer. The shepherds drove home their flocks. From the towers and spires of the great city by the gleaming river came the sound of the vesper bells—mellow notes that broke into soft harmonies as they floated up the hillsides. As the bells sent out their call, a woman came to the doorway of the little cottage and looked smilingly at the playing child, who met the mother's gaze with glances gentle and half sad.

"And is thy play not over, Oxanna?" the woman called. "Listen! the evening bell rings and the Blessed Virgin sends the angels to light the stars."

"Dear mother," the child pleaded, "let me play a little longer, and do thou come to see the play. Look! I build a church with flowers. These round almond blossoms are the great pillars, and the tiny bank of red rose leaves is the altar. These little white star jasmines are the candles; I lay them on the altar. Canst thou see how bright they shine?"

"Nay, child," the mother answered with mild reproof, "'tis a child's play. Think not lightly of the sacred things of the Church. Leave thine aisles and altars. The darkness falls. Come!"

"Mother," said the child softly, slipping a caressing hand into the woman's; "mother, I would say my prayers here to-night by my little church. They would go up and up to the good God. Dost thou not think that the blessed Jesus and the saints can see us better if we pray out under the stars?"

"God can see us everywhere," the mother answered somewhat sternly as she rose to go to the house; but looking at the wistful face upturned to hers in the twilight, she yielded. "Nay, Oxanna, if thou wilt, pray here. The little Jesus will listen to the earthly child."

With folded hands Oxanna knelt beside her mother and with gentle fervor recited duly her *Paters* and *Aves*. These ended, she silently prayed her own prayer:

"Dear Child Jesus, I have played all alone for as long as I can remember. Didst Thou love playmates when Thou wast a little child? I have no playmate and I am lonely. I pray Thee to send me a playfellow in this little garden, dear Jesus. Amen."

The child slept through the quiet night and woke to mark her cathedral aisles again with leaves and flowers. The mother went into the city to sell her needlework, and little Oxanna in the high-walled garden continued her gentle, lonely play.

"I shall have some one to play with soon," she said aloud, her voice the only sound in the garden. "I prayed

to the Christ, and He will send a playmate. Perhaps it will be to-day."

She built an altar of stones against the gray wall and decked it with flowers, and knelt before it and prayed, "Dear Holy Child, I am lonely. Wilt Thou not hear?"

And as she tearfully laid her head against the altar, something softly touched her hair. A child's voice spoke, "Oxanna, why dost thou cry? I am come to play with thee."

"I knew He would send thee," she answered. "Who art thou?" Oxanna looked with joyous wonder at the child before her—fair-haired, with gentle eyes, the sunbeams pouring about him a radiance of light.

"Dost thou not know me?" asked the child.

"Art thou—art thou—surely thou art the Child Jesus," Oxanna exclaimed, wonder giving place to happiness in her eyes. "Hast Thou come to play with me?"

And together they played among the flowers in the cool shadows of the garden and the warm sunlight of the fields until twilight came.

Then the Christ Child spoke: "I leave thee now, but first



here is a gift for thee. It is Joy." He touched her eyes and lips with His hand and vanished.

When the mother returned at nightfall, Oxanna ran to meet her.

"Thy face is joyous, my child," exclaimed the tired woman. "Hast thou had a happy play?"

"O mother, mother," cried the child, "such a happy play! The Child Jesus has been here, and I shall never be sad again, for He gave me the gift of joy."

"Thou hast strange imaginings in thy games, Oxanna, child; but if thy day has been happy, I am content."

"Nay, mother," the little girl protested, "He was here most surely, and the birds came at His call and sang more joyously than I have ever heard them sing before; and the pomegranate bush in the shadowy corner by the wall, which thou rememberest hast never flowered, sent out many blossoms when He touched it. Was not this the Christ? And He will come again, often and often, to play. Oh, I am happy, happy!"

"Thy face is happy, my child," answered the mother

soberly, "happier than I have ever seen it before; but the birds are asleep and silent, and the pomegranate bush in the corner is as dark as it has always been."

"The night is falling, mother; thou canst not see from here. Come!"

Oxanna led her mother to the pomegranate bush, and it was as the child had said, covered with blood-red flowers.

"I do not understand," the mother said wonderingly, and turned toward the house. Oxanna sped up the path with dancing feet and glanced like a beam of light within the dark doorway.

Day after day Oxanna played in the garden or on the quiet hill slopes, her lips caroling little melodies. And day after day she spent the happy hours with the Divine Playmate, whose presence filled her with joy.

"Wilt Thou always come to play with me, dear Jesus?" Oxanna asked.

"Not always," answered the Christ Child. "One day I shall give thee a new gift, and then the playtimes will have passed."

But in present content and happiness Oxanna lived her life; and bearing always the treasure of joy which the Holy Child had given her, she brought peace to the little home on the hillside. Was there a task to be performed, she did it with ready hands; a weary mother to soothe, Oxanna caressed her lovingly. And as she learned to help in the intricate needlework which meant their daily bread, she softly sang her heartening little songs.

When she went with her mother to the great church in the city to pray, her happy eyes made those who looked at her happy, too; and the old priest to whom Oxanna's mother had told the story of the Divine Playmate, said to those who spoke of the young girl's strange beauty, "Ah, the Christ Child has given her the gift of joy, and we feel His presence as she smiles at us."

One day the old priest asked her, "Does the Christ Child still come to play with thee?"

"Often and often, my father," she replied. "When I go on errands for my mother, He goes with me; and when I am at work, He enters the room with the sunlight; and

when my work is done and I go to play in the garden, He comes there too. His face is always bright with a soft light like the stars, and I seem to see Him even when He is not here playing with me."

"Thou happy child of God!" murmured the old priest. "May He always be with thee!"

"Nay, the Child Jesus will not always play with me," Oxanna said. "He has told me that one day He will come for the last playtime."

"And then what wilt thou do?" the priest asked.

"I know not," she softly answered, "but I am sure that I shall always be happy with the flowers and the trees and the sunshine, and that He will teach me other plays to play when He is gone."

And she ran lightly up the hillside to her home, singing as she went. Wordless melodies they were, now gay, now dreamy—full of the joy of the life about her. So Oxanna passed her happy childhood.

Then one day the Divine Child took her hand and led her from the sheltered garden out through the fields and up

to the stony passes of the higher hills. There were no flowers; only sparse bushes and briers. Oxanna crouched by a great stone to avoid the rude blasts of wind. Before her stood the fair Child with two rough twigs in His hands.

"What makest Thou, dear Playmate?" the girl asked.

"A cross," was the answer. "It is for thee. Dost thou know what it means?"

"A little," she whispered in awe. "Thou wilt tell me?"

"No need," He answered in gentle tones. "Thou wilt learn, for eyes and heart will teach thee." He touched her with the little cross and gave it into her hand. "This is my second gift to thee. Keep it in remembrance of me, but keep thou also the first gift."

"Thou goest?" she asked, smiling up at Him through tears.

And the Divine One, smiling back at her, moved toward the sunset light and vanished in the gold-and-purple radiance.

Oxanna walked down the twilight slopes toward her

home at the edge of the village. At the gateway of her garden she met the old priest hastening toward the house.

"Is thy mother within?" he inquired hurriedly. "Help is needed for a sick child at the other end of the village, and I come——"

"Wait, father," Oxanna cried as she sprang before him. "Mother is weary and she grows old. Let me go! I am a great, strong girl now, and it is time for me to share the work."

"Come, then, and hasten," the priest answered as he turned again toward the road.

Oxanna paused in the darkness of the garden, kissed the little cross in her hand, and laid it on the stone altar which she had built long ago by the wall.

"Dear Jesus," she whispered, "I will try to learn;" and then with hurrying feet she overtook the priest already on the road.

In the house to which she was taken, she tended the sick child with loving hands, and passed from this service to others where the good priest needed her. A new light came

into her face, and, though her lips became grave, happiness was always in her eyes. Even when her mother died the joyous look did not fail; it only grew more loving as it rested on the little children whose homes had been motherless longer than hers.

"Mothers are so dear," she said to herself, "and these little children have scarcely known what a mother is. Perhaps I might give them some of the love that lives in mothers' hearts. Dear Christ," she continued, passing into prayer, "Thou hadst a loving mother. Teach me to give the joy of home to these little ones."

She sought the priest and told him her desire. Accepting his counsel, she entered a convent in the nearby city. Here after due time of preparation, she began her chosen work, gathering within the sheltering walls of the nunnery the children whose homes were desolate; loving them, teaching them the sacred stories which she had learned, and especially dwelling on the love of Christ for little children such as they.

Year after year new children came under her care, and

she experienced an ever-renewed joy as she soothed lonely little souls and watched sad eyes grow happy. If reproved by her superiors in the convent for indulging too much gayety in her charges, she would remonstrate gently, "Forgive us our joy, if it displease thee; but Christ Himself put the joy in my heart and I needs must share it."

And the prioress would turn away, remembering the story which had drifted in from the village whence Oxanna came, that the Holy Christ had appeared years ago to this gentle nun and had given her two gifts—Joy and Love.

Bearing these gifts in outstretched hands, Oxanna lived her life until the time came when she could no longer serve those about her. In quiet peace she lay in her convent cell, and reached out her arms as if to some one standing above in the light from the window. She prayed aloud, "Thou beloved Christ, O Holy Child, I have been happy a long lifetime through Thy blessed gift of joy. I can use it here no more. Take back Thy gift, I pray Thee, and give it to some child as lonely as I was in my garden solitude. And Thy second gift"—her trembling hand

made the sign of the cross over her slow-beating heart—"Thy gift of love, give it to those who have the care of little children."

And with smiling eyes Oxanna fell asleep.

A CHRISTMAS CAROLL

What sweeter musick can we bring,
Than a Caroll, for to sing
The Birth of this our heavenly King?
Awake the Voice! awake the String!
Heart, Eare, and Eye, and every thing,
Awake! the while the active Finger
Runs division with the Singer.

Dark and dull night, flie hence away,
And give the honour to this Day,
That sees December turn'd to May.
If we may ask the reason, say;
The why, and wherefore all things here
Seem like the Spring-time of the yeere?
Why do's the chilling Winters morne
Smile, like a field beset with corne?

A CHRISTMAS CAROLL

Or smell, like to a meade new-shorne,
Thus, on the sudden? Come and see
The cause, why things thus fragrant be:
'Tis He is borne, whose quickning Birth
Gives life and lustre, publike mirth,
To Heaven, and the under-Earth.

We see Him come, and know him ours,
Who, with His Sun-shine, and His showers,
Turnes all the patient ground to flowers.
The Darling of the world is come,
And fit it is, we finde a roome
To welcome Him. The nobler part
Of all the house here, is the heart,

Which we will give Him; and bequeath
This Hollie, and this Ivie Wreath,
To do Him honour; who's our King,
And Lord of all this Revelling.

ROBERT HERRICK.

HERMANN'S TREASURE BOX

In a woodland on the banks of the Rhine, near the old city of Cologne, a boy and a girl were gathering nuts, as intent on their horde as if they were squirrels laying up a supply for the winter; but the trees were scattered and the nuts few.

"The great basket is as empty as Queen Hela's dish," laughed the boy, as the sparse handfuls of brown nuts disappeared in the roomy basket.

"Hush, Hermann!" said the girl primly. "We are not to talk of Hela and Loki and the Rhine daughters and the rest. Brother Anselm has forbidden it because it is wicked to speak of the old gods as though we still believe in them."

"I did but jest, Elizabeth," the brother returned. "Besides, I named but one and thou hast named three! There, I will cease. I will say 'as empty as the mouth of hell,' if that please thee and mother and father and the old friar

Anselm; but," he added as he turned again to his task, "it is a fearsome saying and I like it not so well."

"Thou shouldst like it," said Elizabeth, folding her hands and devoting herself to her homily. "Thou knowest that Satan lurks everywhere waiting to carry us off to that same mouth of hell, and if thou dost talk of the heathen gods, thy guardian angel will leave thee and thou wilt disappear in a flash of lightning. Brother Anselm said so."

"Thou chatterest like the squirrels," Hermann replied; "nor dost thou understand. I but use the old sayings that the men folk use—the vine dressers and the faggot gatherers on these river slopes by the Rhine. They have told me old tales and taught me old songs, and I sing to the men and women in the vineyards as they gather the grapes. I do not believe these sayings, nor the old tales. But if I could see some of the things that Brother Anselm tells us about when he stops at our house on his begging journeys to the vineyards, I should believe his tales the more."

"What tales dost thou mean?" Elizabeth asked.

"Listen, then," Hermann answered more warmly. "I mean the story of how Saint Lawrence cured the blind man —could our father's arms be cured, think you?—and how the blessed Albert cut through an anvil with his reaping hook. I wish my ax could cut the trees as easily! And how——"

"Nay, then," Elizabeth interrupted, "if thou wert as good as that holy man perhaps it would happen that thy ax could cut wood as if it were straw."

"I would rather that our little loaves of black bread grew as did those of Saint Clara and of Saint Isidore," the younger child returned ruefully; and at the thought both fell to work again, remembering that when winter came and the summer herbs were gone, their dry bread would be seasoned only by the nuts which they gathered during the autumn.

The squirrels flashed through the trees above them; brown leaves fell and nuts dropped as the branches were moved by the wind. The air had a touch of frost; and, as

the sunlight grew fainter, the bare feet and searching fingers of the two children became numb. They kept at their task, however, until they could no longer distinguish brown nuts from brown leaves in the twilight of the woods. Then, slipping a freshly broken branch through their basket, each took an end, and sharing their burden they made their way out from under the trees to the rough path that led down the hillside.

They walked slowly with many slippings of the basket. Coming to an open spot they stopped to rest. Here the light was brighter than under the trees, and it fell clearly on an uncovered shrine which held an image of the Virgin and Child.

A familiar place this, to Hermann and Elizabeth. Here they had played as little children before there was work for their young hands. Here their father had carried them in his strong arms and left them while he went to work in the neighboring vineyard or to cut wood on the slopes above the shrine. They could hear the sound of his ax biting into the trees, and even now they could remember the breathless



moment of excitement when they heard the tree crashing to earth. Here, too, they played in a later time when the strong arms of their father had been hurt by a falling tree, and when their mother, going now in her husband's place to work in the vineyard, committed her two children to the care of the Eternal Mother, and left them playing on the flat stones beneath the image. And here on this night, as they paused to rest, they knelt as they had been taught to do, and with folded hands prayed before the image of the Virgin and Child.

But the boy's eyes wandered as his lips repeated the familiar words of the *Ave*, and finally he rose from his knees and going to the edge of the little platform on which the shrine rested, tugged at one of the flagstones.

"What dost thou?" said Elizabeth, joining him.

"I open the treasure box," he answered, and presently raised the stone.

The boy and girl peered into the square opening, and lifted one by one the simple playthings hidden there in the days of their younger childhood—pebbles with

bright glints of crystal, beads from a broken rosary, acorn cups, bird feathers, and leaves now brown and crumbling.

Elizabeth looked at them and silently put them back. Hermann replaced the stone with care. "Our great treasure must be hidden again," he said.

"Our great treasure will not buy us shoes when the snow comes," Elizabeth sighed, but kept back the tears.

"Wipe thy eyes, sister," said Hermann consolingly; "perhaps the Blessed Virgin will send us shoes." And lifting their burden, they continued their walk homeward with scarcely a word spoken.

They were cold and hungry and tired. In the gloomy stone hut they found a sick father and a work-worn mother, a tiny fire and a meager supper. In silence they ate, then threw themselves on the straw in the corner of the room and fell asleep.

The days grew colder; snow lay on the ground. Since the harvest in the vineyard was over, the mother went to the town to find work, or, if need be, to ask alms of the good

brothers in the monastery. In the hut above the river the sick man shivered on his pallet, and the children replenished the fire from time to time with the wood they had gathered while the days were warm.

Hermann went to the door and looked out, then returned to the fire irresolutely. At length he poured into a bag a part of the stored nuts, and throwing the bag over his shoulder he started out.

Elizabeth, who had watched him wonderingly, called from the doorway, "Whither dost thou go, Hermann?"

"I go into Cologne to buy us shoes," he answered with the air of one whose wallet is filled with gold.

"Thou! to buy shoes! Nay, thou wilt only freeze thy bare feet on the way. Thou canst not buy shoes with nothing!"

But Elizabeth's doubts did not delay him, and he walked on as fast as he could toward the city. He had to stop often to rub his bare feet; hands and ill-clad body ached too; and long before he came to the great gates of the town he was dumb with suffering, so that as he reached the shoe-

maker's shop in the narrow street behind the gray cathedral, he could scarcely make known his errand.

"Give thee shoes for nuts!" exclaimed the old shoemaker when he finally understood the boy. "By our Lady, thou little knave, thou wouldst steal an honest man's labor if his back were turned. Be off!" and with blows he drove the boy from his shop.

Out in the cold again, Hermann, dismayed and disheartened, feared to try whether some other workman would set a higher value on his nuts. Aimlessly he wandered into the cathedral.

It was warmer here. Hermann walked down the shadowy nave of the church—the old minster of Cologne. At length he paused before the shrine of the Three Kings, the shrine of brass and gold bright with inlaid colors and with jewels. Hermann gazed at the images of the kings and at the beautiful statue of the Virgin which stood above them with the Christ Child in her arms; but the pain in his feet and hands brought tears to his eyes and the tears blurred the wonderful silver figures on the shrine. Unconsciously he

knelt, but the words of the familiar prayers did not come to his lips. He could not remember them. With closed eyes he cried in his heart, "Blessed Mother, help me! I know not what to do." He said it over many times until he could no longer think the words. Then suddenly some one pushed him rudely with heavy-shod foot. Hermann looked up startled at the sacristan of the cathedral.

"What dost thou here, sleeping before the shrine? Art a thief waiting to steal the jewels?" and with words and blows, as rough as the shoemaker's, the sacristan drove Hermann from the church.

Hermann made his way home as best he could, and entering the hut, threw himself on the floor by the fire with never a word. Seeing his distress, Elizabeth did not question him. Soon the mother returned; the family ate their frugal meal and slept.

In the morning Hermann moved about with a face strangely bright. With gentle thoughtfulness he helped in the household tasks, and when all were finished, he beckoned Elizabeth without the door.

"Thou must not mind the cold," he said, as his sister shivered on the snowy doorstep. "It is only for a little time; thou shalt have thy shoes to-day. I have had a vision this night. The holy Virgin and the Child stood by my pallet. They came straight from the shrine of the Three Kings in the cathedral in the city—nay, do not doubt me. I knew the jeweled robes the Virgin wore, for I saw them but yesterday. And she spoke to me and said, 'Hermann, thou hast prayed me to help thee. Look in thy treasure box, and thou shalt find what thou dost need.'"

"Thy treasure box!" cried Elizabeth incredulously. "What treasure box hast thou, my brother? Thou art dreaming still."

"I am not dreaming; I did not dream. I *saw*," the boy replied earnestly. "Our treasure box is beneath the shrine on the hillside, and there we shall find shoes for both of us. Come! Do not doubt. Come!"

Hermann caught his sister's reluctant hand and urged her to the deserted shrine of the Virgin where they had so

often played. The stones were buried under the snow. Scraping it away, Hermann with difficulty pried up the slab and found in the hollow only the pebbles and nuts and beads which he and his sister had placed there.

"I said thou wert dreaming," Elizabeth cried. "Dost think thyself so good that the Virgin and the saints will visit thee?"

"Nay," answered Hermann with gentleness, "it was not because I am good but because God is, that His Mother came. Only about the treasure box and the shoes I have misunderstood."

That night another vision came to Hermann. Again God's Mother stood beside him and seemed to say, smilingly: "Thy treasure box is full. Why dost thou not look?" And again in the morning Hermann lifted the stone at the shrine and found but the old playtime-treasures of beads and pebbles.

The vision came the third night, and in the cold dawn Hermann for the third time lifted the stone. Again he saw only the things gathered by childish fingers. He knelt

on the snow staring stupidly into the hollow. Angrily he threw out the beads and pebbles and nuts. "Have done with nonsense!" he cried. Then with sudden remorse he looked up at the Virgin's image in the shrine. Had it changed, or had the hand always pointed at the hole beside him?

With renewed faith he picked up a sharp bit of rock and dug away the earth at the bottom of his treasure box. Though the ground was hard with frost, it yielded to his vigorous digging and fell away in rough clods. Then the rock with which he dug struck something flinty and unyielding. A little more digging disclosed another flat stone like those above. Prying and pulling, Hermann at last removed it and found beneath it not shoes but what seemed, at first, leather from which shoes might be made. A pull at the leather tore the rotting skin apart and disclosed a heap of golden coins.

Hermann lifted the gold, piece by piece, into his old cap, and ran breathlessly home.

"Look!" he cried as he flung open the door and faced

father and mother and sister. "See what the Virgin put into my treasure box. Our loaves of bread will grow like those of Saint Clara and Saint Isidore. Come, Elizabeth!" —he placed a gold piece in his sister's hand—"Come, let us go to the city to buy our shoes!"

THE ADORATION OF THE KINGS

(From the *Coventry Miracle Play of the Nativity*)

I. *Rex.*[1] O blessid God, moche ys thy myght!
Where ys this star thatt gawe vs lyght?

II. *Rex.* Now knele we downe here in this presence,
Be-sekying[2] that Lord of hy mangnyffecens
That we ma see his hy exsellence
Yff thatt his swet[3] wyll be.

III. *Rex.* Yondur, brothur, I see the star,
Where-by I kno he ys nott far;
Therefore, lordis, goo we nar[4]
Into this pore place.

I. *Rex.* Hayle, Lorde thatt all this worlde hath wroght!
Hale, God and man to-gedur in-fere![5]
For thow hast made all thyng of noght,
Albe-yt[6] thatt thow lyist porely here;
A cupe-full golde here I haue the broght
In toconyng[7] thow art with-owt pere.[8]

II. *Rex.* Hayle be thow, Lorde of hy mangnyffecens!
In toconyng of prestehod and dyngnete [9] of offece
To the I offur a cupe full off in-sence,
For yt be-hovith the to haue soche sacrefyce.

III. *Rex.* Hayle be thow, Lorde longe lokid fore!
I haue broght the myre [10] for [11] mortalete,
In to-cunyng thow schalt mankynd restore
To lyff be thy dyth upon a tre.

[1] King [2] beseeching [3] sweet [4] near [5] in companionship [6] albeit
[7] token [8] equal [9] dignity [10] myrrh [11] in token of

THE VISIONS OF HERMANN JOSEPH

The high altar in the old Cathedral of Cologne stood lighted for the midnight mass on Christmas eve. The long dim aisles were crowded with people—noblemen and servants, aldermen and inn-loungers, soldiers, burghers, artisans, women, and children. A motley group it was, some gazing at a great star, lighted with candles, which hung from the ceiling that arched above them, some elbowing none too decorously in their eagerness to move closer to the choir.

"Have done with thy shoving," cried a soldier to a young apprentice lad, and used the haft of his sword on the boy's head.

"Have done with thy beating," whimpered the boy. "Dost think to order about as if thou wert King Herod in the play? I have as good a right as thou to see the Christmas mystery." But the soldier had already pushed him aside and moved on.

Two women, one white-haired, the other golden, tried to move forward by following in the opening made by the soldier, but the crowd flowed back and the women seized what advantage they could by standing on the low base of a pillar.

"We can get no nearer," one of them sighed to her companion. "We shall neither see him nor hear him. Look how they crowd at the choir steps. The procession must be coming in."

But the noise grew less as the voices of the choir rose chanting the Christmas hymn.

"Puer natus in Bethlehem
Unde gaudet Jerusalem.

Hic iacet in præsepio,
Qui regnat sine termino.

Cognovit bos et asinus
Quod puer erat Dominus.

Reges de Saba veniunt,
Aurum, tus, myrrham offerunt.

Intrantes domum invicem
Novum salutant Principem.

De matre natus Virgine
Sine virili semine;

Sine serpentis vulnere
De nostro venit sanguine;

In carne nobis similis,
Peccato sed dissimilis;

Ut redderet nos homines
Deo et sibi similes.

In hoc natali gaudio
Benedicamus Domino:

Laudetur sancta Trinitas,
Deo dicamus gratias."

THE VISIONS OF HERMANN JOSEPH

[A child is born in Bethlehem and all Jerusalem rejoices. He lies in a stable, He who reigns forever. The ox and the ass know that the Child is the Lord. Kings come from the East and offer gold and frankincense and myrrh. Entering the dwelling, one after the other, they salute the young Prince.

Born of a virgin mother, an immaculate mother, without the curse brought by the serpent, He came like us in flesh but in sinlessness unlike us, descended of our blood, that He might make mankind like to God and to Himself.

Rejoicing in His birth, let us bless the Lord, let us praise the Holy Trinity, let us give thanks to God.]

The long procession of choir boys, acolytes, and priests passed into the choir; the archbishop, brilliant in jeweled robes, took his place in the high canopied seat, and the priests began the service of the Christmas mass. The crowd in the aisles, less reverent than the groups within the choir screen, waited impatiently for the close of the long recital of the "Book of the generation of Jesus Christ," waited for the beginning of the *Officium Stellæ*, the Service of the Star.

A little wave of excitement stirred the people as two

acolytes brought from behind the altar a cradle filled with straw and placed it between lighted candles on the altar steps. In the mimic manger lay an image of the infant Jesus.

Then the mystery play began. From the shrine of the Three Kings, down separate aisles, came three men dressed in brilliant garb to simulate the Magi who came to the manger of Bethlehem. Passing down the aisles they met at the entrance to the choir, where they turned to the star burning brightly above their heads, and, as if following His star in the East, they sang:

"The star shines with marvelous radiance.
It shows that the King of Kings is born.
His coming the prophets foretold in ages past."

The crowd stood on tiptoe as the three kings advanced toward the altar and knelt by the manger where the image of the child lay, to offer their gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh. The choir was chanting the story of the

wise men who came to worship "Him that was born King of the Jews."

Then on the high steps of the altar, above the manger and the kneeling kings, appeared a boy dressed in a long white robe with gilt wings fastened on the shoulders. As the light from the blazing star fell on his face he chanted: "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord."

And the full-voiced choir, like the multitude of the heavenly host, sang: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

"Ah! 'tis this I have come to hear," whispered one of the women at the pillar to her companion. "Listen to our Hermann's voice! Is it not that of the Christmas angel himself?"

The crowded aisles were silent now, held by the beauty of the singing.

The long service ended, the procession passed out singing, the crowd melted away.

As the two women moved along among the people hastening homeward, the younger spoke, "It brings sadness to think of Hermann's vacant place at the Christmas feast."

"Think not of that, Elizabeth," the old woman chided. "He is consecrated to God's service now and we must not wish him back among us."

In the church the acolytes were extinguishing the candles; and soon, except for the lamps kept always burning before the altars, the church was in darkness.

Into the silence and deep shadows stole a slender, white-robed figure. Noiselessly it approached the shrine of the Three Kings. The faint lamp-light shone on the face of the boy who had sung the part of the angel in the Nativity play. He approached the shrine, holding a bright red apple toward the image of the Child and the Virgin. In a low tone he said:

"See, dear Christ, my Saint Nicholas apple! Wilt thou not take it? It is most beautiful and it is my very own. Quickly, I pray! I fear the sacristan will come, and he has always hated me since that first day he found me here."

Carefully Hermann climbed upon the shrine and stretched his hand toward the hand of the little statue.

"Nay, dear Blessed Virgin," exclaimed the boy, speaking aloud in his excitement, "He is too little and cannot reach it. I pray thee, take the apple for Him."

And the statue of the Virgin moved and took the fruit from Hermann's hand.

A noise behind him made him turn. There stood the sacristan with lighted taper, peering with horror at the boy standing on the fair shrine.

"Down! thou sacrilegious varlet," the sacristan cried. "Ever since thy mother brought thee to the monks' school with a wild tale of money given thee by the Virgin, thou hast done nothing but loiter about this shrine. Verily that money was obtained by thy stealing jewels from the shrine and selling them to some unsuspecting goldsmith. Thou didst begin thy knavish tricks here that winter day three years ago, and even thy singing of the angel's message in the mystery shall not keep thee from punishment to-night."

Just as the sacristan caught Hermann's arm roughly to



drag him down from the shrine, the statue of the Virgin moved and stretched a protecting hand over the boy's head. The sacristan fell back speechless. The Virgin above the shrine still leaned forward.

Hermann lifted an adoring face. "I thank thee, blessed Mother! My life's service is thine." And jumping lightly down from the shrine, he walked quickly across the aisle and disappeared in the darkness.

Hermann lived with the monks now, and because of his devotion to the Christ Child and the Virgin, the name of Joseph was added to his old name in memory of the earthly father of Jesus, and the boy was called Hermann Joseph ever after.

Hermann Joseph, then, lived and studied in the monastery; and though he seemed to be doing just what the other boys did, there were things—strange and beautiful things—which made him different. In his heart lived the memory of the favors shown him by the Mother of the Christ whom he adored; and because of this his face bore a look

which made others both love and fear him. Because of these memories, too, he lived as if he expected the Christ Child and the Virgin Mother to come to him again and to speak to him, and always he tried to be ready for the blessed vision.

The master of the cathedral choir, a priest learned in the music of the church, finding that Hermann Joseph had a voice of rare sweetness, trained him to sing the rich services of the mass and vespers. Hermann Joseph's voice grew strong, and as clear as the bells of the old tower it rang through the long aisles and echoed from the vaulted ceiling; and it touched the hearts of the listeners with something of the same love for noble and beautiful and holy things that the singer himself felt. For as he sang (he used to tell one of the good monks of the monastery about these visions), he often saw two bright angels pass through the choir, bearing censers from which the incense rose. And before the choristers who sang God's praises with hearts as well as lips, the angels paused with looks of joy, and the incense rose in fragrant clouds to the lofty arches. From

those who sang irreverently or not at all the angels averted their faces, and those whose lives were evil the shining ones hurried past with looks of horror. When these heavenly visitors came, it seemed to Hermann Joseph that God must be very near; and the boy sang with such fervent joy that the priests and monks looked wonderingly at him, thinking that the sounds of his voice were like echoes from heaven. But Hermann Joseph, unconscious of the thoughts he inspired in others, watched the angels as he sang, and saw them move down the long nave and disappear among the distant columns.

Other beautiful visions came to the boy, a young monk now. One day as he walked in the cathedral toward his favorite shrine of the Three Kings with its statue of the Virgin (the beautiful figure that always since that Christmas eve bent lovingly forward as if to bless all who prayed before it), Hermann Joseph heard his name called from above him. He looked up to the triforium, the gallery over the great carved columns, and saw standing there the Christ Child and His Mother. They held out their hands to Her-

mann Joseph and called softly, "Come up here! Come up here!"

Hermann Joseph climbed one of the columns, bracing his feet on the carved stone, and, helped at the last by the Virgin's hand, he reached the high gallery.

The long dim aisles lay below him, the vast arches of stone sprang above his head. The light of the setting sun streamed through the great west window and, colored by the rich glass, glowed radiantly on the face of the Holy Child as He came toward the kneeling boy. The divine pair took him by the hand and walked with him along the gallery, speaking softly of sacred things.

The sunlight faded, darkness came, but still a clear light seemed to burn about the heads of the Mother and Child. The hours passed unnoticed by Hermann Joseph.

With dawn the blessed vision disappeared. When the priests came into the cathedral to matins, they found Hermann Joseph lying prone before the high altar, and as he took his place among them, they saw in his eyes the rapt look of one whose soul had witnessed the beauty of God.

BEFORE THE PALING OF THE STARS

Before the paling of the stars,
Before the winter morn,
Before the earliest cockcrow,
Jesus Christ was born:
Born in a stable,
Cradled in a manger,
In the world His hands had made
Born a stranger.

Priest and king lay fast asleep
In Jerusalem,
Young and old lay fast asleep
In crowded Bethlehem:
Saint and Angel, ox and ass,
Kept a watch together
Before the Christmas daybreak
In the winter weather.

BEFORE THE PALING OF THE STARS

Jesus on His Mother's breast,
In the stable cold,
Spotless Lamb of God was He,
Shepherd of the fold:
Let us kneel with Mary maid,
With Joseph bent and hoary,
With Saint and Angel, ox and ass,
To hail the King of Glory.

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI.

IN THE CAUSE OF THE CHILD

The servant of God, Francis of Assisi, on a time called together all the brothers of his order in a general meeting. They came from far and near, by land and by sea, to receive from the lips of the "glorious poor little one of Christ" renewed inspiration for their earnest work. By tens and by hundreds they drifted to the meeting place until all the plain of Saint Mary of the Angels was filled with the gray-frocked "little brothers" of St. Francis.

Courteously they greeted one another: "God give thee peace, my brother! How fares the Cross of Christ in thy province?" And the answer came, "By God's grace, well."

Quietly they set to work to fashion with their own hands some covering under which they might rest during the days of the meeting. They cut boughs of beech trees and wands of willows, and weaving them into mats and trellises set them up as roofs and walls that they and their fellows

might be protected from rain and from the fierce Italian sun. All worked together, directors of provinces with the least friar of their charge, arranging the huts in groups for the brothers of the different districts. When the work was finished, the field of Saint Mary of the Angels was covered with little leafy houses, and therefore was this meeting called the "Chapter of the Trellises."

While the brothers worked in companies, from the towns and country round about came many people to see the great assembly of holy men—counts and servitors, barons and country folk, knights, cardinals, bishops, abbots, even clergy from the Pope's court, pressing in close about the field.

"Of a truth," said a great cardinal as he drew rein in the shade of a tree, "this is the camp and the army of the knights of God. Dost see, my lord," he added, turning to a richly dressed nobleman who rode beside him, "how overlord and serf toil together with their hands and no one shirks his task?"

"Nay," answered Count Tiso laughingly, "by thy own speech all are knights and of equal rank. But there is one

yonder who has not lifted a branch or a twig to aid the work of the hut building. He was standing by that great tree as we approached the camp, and he still stands there, having, on my faith, moved not an eyelid. Yet by his dress he is one of the order."

The cardinal of Perugia looked where the count pointed and saw a slender, youthful figure clad in the robe and cowl of a Franciscan friar. The hood, pushed back, showed the face of a young man, pale, austere, but beautiful.

The cardinal and Count Tiso rode slowly toward him, a little curious about this one idler in so great a multitude of workers, and as they passed beneath the tree, the count suddenly stopped and addressed the young Franciscan, speaking in Italian, but not knowing whether the friar before him would understand the language. "Canst tell us, good youth," he said, "in what part of the field the minister general, the great Francis, will speak?"

The young brother, startled from his deep reverie, lifted dark eyes of strange sadness to the speaker, and after a moment answered in the Tuscan tongue, "Nay, I know not."

"Art Italian, then," exclaimed the count—"from the district of Florence, perhaps?"

"Not of Florence or of Italy," he answered with simple dignity; "from over seas."

Count Tiso, abashed by the straight gaze of the Franciscan and ashamed now of the idle curiosity which had prompted him to force the silent youth into talk, spurred his horse and joined the cardinal.

"Are the questions of the Count of Camposanpiero answered?" asked the churchman with a smile.

Count Tiso's air of gayety had suddenly changed to a serious mood. "Yonder boy," he said earnestly, "is a prince in the garb of a begging friar. His voice would lead men on to charge into the thickest of the battle; or—or—it would bring birds and beasts to eat from his hand, and little children to listen at his knee."

"Is he another Francis, then," laughed the cardinal, "or has Charlemagne returned?"

"In truth, neither," the count replied, as if the question were not a jest. "And yet, being one of the knights of

God, as your Eminence has called all of these men about us here, the young Franciscan, methinks, might be a warrior to lead another crusade."

"Ah!" said the smiling cardinal, "now is he Godfrey de Bouillon."

Meanwhile the young friar, his abstraction broken by the question of the count, passed among the groups of huts; and when the hundreds of men moved forward as if by one impulse toward a little knoll at the edge of the field, he was carried with them, lost in their numbers like a wave in the surge of great waters.

On the knoll stood Francis, their leader, the founder of their order, and he spoke to them of the work which they had done and of that which was still to be done for Christ and for men. With such fervor did he speak that the hearts of all were kindled with eagerness; and during the days of meeting he preached in so devout a fashion, and with so great a spirit of love, that each brother who heard came to feel that God had made special choice of him for the work given him to do. So the meeting ended, and each one pres-

ent having been appointed to his district, left the plain of Saint Mary of the Angels with the director of his province.

As they were leaving, Francis walked about to give final words of encouragement to each little band. Crossing from one group to another, in a hidden spot among the clustered huts he came upon a kneeling figure bowed in prayer. Unwilling to interrupt secret and earnest devotions, Francis went quietly on; then paused and turned back only to find that the friar had risen and was coming toward him. It was the youthful brother who had roused the interest of the Count of Camposanpiero on the first day of the assembly.

"My father," he said hesitatingly to Francis.

"My son," replied Francis gently.

"Wilt thou, my father, receive the confession of one who is not worthy to be thy follower?"

"Speak," said the older man, laying both hands on the youth's shoulders, and looking earnestly into his downcast face.

"I have but lately joined the ranks of thy followers," the other began. "In Africa, where I was sent, God visited

me with grievous illness, showing that that field of labor was not for me. I took vessel for Spain, but the boat on which I voyaged was wrecked, and I was cast on the shore of Sicily. Having no director, and hearing of this assembly, I came hither, hoping that God would give me leave to work with some of those who met here. But, lo! they depart, and it is not by chance but by the will of God that I have not been appointed to any province. I would ask thy permission to lay aside my cowl as one whom God deems unworthy to wear it, and yet—and yet—" His voice died into silence.

"There is more to tell, my little brother?" urged Francis.

"Before I took the vows of the brotherhood I hesitated long, thinking that God had need of me elsewhere; but on a time while I prayed apart in my cell—" He stopped abruptly as one who would fain recall his words.

"Thou wast then a monk of the older orders?" asked Francis with interest. "Continue, my son."

"As I prayed in the darkness," the youth began, after

a moment's silence, his voice growing strangely sweet and compelling as he spoke, "a marvelous light shone round about me, and therein I saw the young Christ. He wore the dress of a child of poverty, and as He stood there the massive walls, the carved chapels, the great peaceful cloisters seemed to fade behind Him, and He stood among the poor of the earth, the suffering and the weak, and was as one of them. When the vision ended, I went out into the world, thinking that Christ pointed the way; but from Africa and from Spain have I been turned back, and here stand I idle. What doth God will that I should do?"

"Of a surety," answered Francis, looking into the luminous eyes of his young follower, "God needeth thee for His work in the world. The director of the province of Bologna hath left but now. Do thou hasten after him. The road leadeth yonder among the tall pine trees below the hill. Say that I sent thee and will later write to him concerning thy work. What is thy name?"

"Antony, my father."

"Farewell, Antony, my son most dear."



Francis turned toward the House of Saint Mary of the Angels, where he dwelt. Antony hastened along the dusty road.

In the hermitage of Monte Paolo, near Bologna, Antony was allotted his task, such work as was given to the young and inexperienced brothers of the order. He swept the floors and helped in the kitchen and the garden to prepare the simple food of the brothers, while they went out among men to preach, to teach, to tend the sick, to aid the needy. Meanwhile there came a letter from Francis in Assisi to the director of the province of Bologna saying:

" Some weeks before the late meeting of the chapter general, there came to us from Spain Brother Sebastian, who brought word of great grief among the Augustinians of that country by reason of the fact that one of their number, a youth of marvelous ability, had left the monastery to join the ranks of our brotherhood. He was of an illustrious family of Lisbon, being a descendant of Godfrey of Bouillon, the noble leader of the great crusade. More than this, the young monk's learning and sanctity were the

glory of his fellows; and since he was sent by God's will to Africa, naught hath been heard of him. His name was Antony, and that Antony whom I lately sent to join thy company is, if I mistake not, the same whom they mourn in Spain. Look to his work. God hath sent him to us."

In the hermitage, among the group of brothers, Antony continued his humble service with outward calm. But at times there came to him visions of those warlike knights whose swords had wrested the sepulcher of Christ from the infidels, and he, too, longed to battle against unbelievers. And again, as he saw others go out to preach, he recalled days when he also spoke before multitudes, and moved them from evil. But all these thoughts he hid in his heart, praying God to forgive him his pride; and with humility he performed his simple duties among his fellows.

During these days of quiet, when his work took him into the garden of the hermitage, knowing himself to be quite alone, he would sometimes pray aloud or softly sing. The tones of his voice were so sweet that birds came flying about

him, or lit on his shoulder; and strange, shy creatures of the woods followed him as he went through the secluded paths of the countryside. Men, too, began to feel his power. For once in a time of great sickness, when the brothers of the hermitage had asked aid of a rich lord of the district and had been refused, Antony sought permission of his superior to repeat the request.

"What reason hast thou to expect success where those of longer service have failed?" asked the older brother, but his tone was not unkind.

"None except my faith," answered Antony.

As he spoke there was with him a vision that had led to his making the request. In his cell, as he knelt in midnight vigil praying for the poor, suffering and dying in the villages and towns round about, there came to him again the fair Christ Child who said, "Why dost thou bring me no aid, seeing that I suffer?"

Antony was silent, not understanding.

Again spoke the Child, "The little children die for lack of care, and thou standest here idle. Inasmuch as thou neg-

lectest them, thou neglectest me; and whatever thou dost for the least of these, thou dost for me."

The vision disappeared, but Antony carried it in his heart as he plead with the rich man. The man could not resist his pleading, and gave not only money, but a great house in the town where the sick might be cared for. Here Antony worked, winning back to health many whose lives the other brothers had given up hope of saving, so that these cures came to be regarded as miracles. But Antony, turning aside from the looks of reverence which he met in the eyes of men, went among the little children. They, as their strength returned, came flocking to him with happy laughter like birds flying about in the sunshine.

And the director wrote to Francis, "It is as if thou hadst found thy vicar, reverend Father, and sent him among us."

After the plague was ended, Antony, too, was sent to preach, and from one place to another he journeyed, drawing people of every degree about him. For the young Franciscan met all men as his equals; and noblemen bowed before

the power of the fearless man whom Count Tiso, striking the truth more squarely than he knew, had called a prince in the dress of a begging friar; and poor men gladly listened to one whose simplicity and poverty made him so like themselves. It was during this time that Antony preached before the cardinals assembled at the papal court. Here were men of many nations speaking many languages, and Antony, through his learning, made himself understood by them all, speaking, says an old writer, "so subtly, so sweetly, so clearly" that the pope and the cardinals marveled; and so compelling was Antony's fiery eloquence that one of them recalled words which a noble count of Padua had spoken concerning a young Franciscan at the Chapter of the Trellises—"His voice would lead men to charge into the thickest of the battle."

"Into the thickest of the battle," mused the Cardinal of Perugia. "The battlefield to-day lies among the heretics of France. 'Tis there that bold leaders like this young friar are needed. He would be another Charlemagne fighting the Saracens." And after a time it came about that

Antony went to preach against the heretics in France. With the spirit of his ancestor, Godfrey de Bouillon, Antony led this new crusade; and the great work ended, he went back to the old life of peace.

And yet there were moments which called still for the courage of the warrior. In Padua, where Antony's work now lay—for he had established a monastery just without the walls—lived Ancelinus, the tyrant of the city. His deeds of oppression bore hard on all, but greatly on the poor of the city; and the poor were the brothers of Antony. Indifferent to danger, Antony entered the presence of Ancelinus, where nobles, in dread for their lives, were silent. The young monk's courage and zeal, his eloquence and purity of heart, gained mercy for the oppressed and brought the tyrant to repentance.

"A miracle!" cried those who were present at the strange scene.

"Not so much the event as the man!" exclaimed one. "Have ye ever before heard a voice like his, so filled with stern command and yet with music? Or seen eyes so

piercing and withal so kind? Or met one wearing a beggar's dress who looked so like a mighty prince? Antony himself is the miracle!" And the Count of Camposanpiero, forgetting the formal courtesies of the palace, hastened down the broad stair, out into the narrow street, running to overtake the slight, gray-hooded figure that was already bent upon other work.

"Good brother," said Count Tiso, breathless. And as he spoke he saw what had not been apparent in the palace of Ancelinus, as the preacher, with eyes like stars and tongue of flame, had denounced the tyrant among his courtiers. Count Tiso saw a pale face prematurely marked with lines of sadness and shoulders bent with weariness under the mean habit; but the voice, as it answered his salutation, was as ringing and clear as a child's.

"I followed thee, good brother," said the count, "to ask if thou wouldst lodge this night with me, seeing it grows late and thy monastery lies some distance without the walls."

"I will come right willingly," answered Antony.

"Often, when the gates close before my work in the city is done, I remain within the walls."

That night Antony, in a great, quiet room in the palace of Count Tiso, knelt at midnight praying in the darkness. No sound came from house or street; the city slept serenely, for from the greatest to the least had gone the news of Antony's victory over the harsh master, and they had cried: "Not Ancelinus the tyrant, but Antony the little brother, rules."

The little brother knelt, thanking God that the happiness of the city was for that time assured. "But I tire of the battles," cried the kneeling saint; "if it be Thy will, my God, let there be for me, in the brief time that is left, only the blessed work of serving the poor."

Sounds of music came to his ears; a light, soft and glowing, filled the room. Before him stood the little Christ, holding out His arms. Antony gathered Him to his breast, and the Child lovingly caressed him.

"My Antony," spoke the fair vision, "dost thou recall those other times when I came to thee?"



"My beloved Christ," answered Antony, his face glowing in the light which shone out from the form within his arms, "the first time that Thou didst come to me, I was resting in a life of ease hesitating to share the burden of the world's sorrow; and again, when I thought my duty lay in silent acceptance and in humble retirement, Thou didst show me that one must battle for the right, not stand apart from the conflict, and that whatever strength we have must be used in Thy service, not left to fall into dust like a sword rusting in its scabbard."

"Thou hast fought well, my knight. The work is ended," the Christ Child said. "Thou mayest unbelt thy sword."

And great peace came into Antony's heart at the words.

Long the vision stayed. Light and perfume filled the room. Soft music sounded. The Christ Child, His arms about Antony's neck, lovingly kissed His knight, and softly they spoke together.

Roused by the light and the sounds of music, Count Tiso stood in the dark hallway. As he parted the heavy

curtains that covered the door, the light flooded the hallway, perfume floated out, the sounds of music grew louder. At the farther end of the apartment the count saw Antony's slender kneeling figure holding in his arms the Divine Child, from whose face and body came the radiance that lighted the room.

The count, looking with wonder at his guest, suddenly recalled the youthful friar beneath the tree at Saint Mary of the Angels. Again was Antony's face the face of youth, but in place of the disappointment of that moment at the Chapter of the Trellises shone upon it now a great joy. The count dropped the curtains and went away, saying silently to himself: "It is neither Antony of Padua nor the little brother of Saint Mary of the Angels, but a knight of God who returns from the wars to kneel at the throne of his King."

AN ODE TO THE BIRTH OF OUR SAVIOR

In numbers, and but these few,
I sing Thy Birth, Oh Jesu!
Thou prettie Babie, borne here,
With sup'rabundant scorn here:
Who for Thy Princely Port here,
 Hadst for Thy place
 Of Birth, a base
Out-stable for thy Court here.

Instead of neat Inclosures
Of interwoven Osiers;
Instead of fragrant Posies,
Of Daffodils and Roses;
Thy cradle, Kingly Stranger,
 As Gospell tells,
 Was nothing els,
But, here, a homely manger.

AN ODE TO THE BIRTH OF OUR SAVIOR

But we with Silks (not Crewells),
With sundry precious Jewells,
And Lilly-work will dresse Thee;
And as we dispossesse Thee
Of clouts, wee'l make a chamber,
 Sweet Babe, for Thee,
 Of Ivorie,
And plaister'd round with Amber.

ROBERT HERRICK.

THE HALL OF THE CHILD

In the old monastery of Santarem, in Portugal, was a room known as the Hall of the Child. Its walls and ceilings and floor were of gray stone, like the rest of the monastery buildings; its high windows admitted scanty sunshine, just as in the other cold, gray rooms; but the sunlight, meager as it was, fell on dim frescoes such as no other hall or chapel or cell possessed in all the great building. The frescoes had faded since they were first painted on the walls by Brother Placidus in the early days of the monastery; but though the colors were faint, the pictures could still be seen when the morning sun shone through the narrow east windows, and at this hour one could understand why the room had been named the "Hall of the Child," for in all the frescoes appeared the fair and gentle face of the young Jesus.

In the scene by the entrance door, the Child lay in the manger, and Mary and Joseph knelt beside Him while

tall white figures of angels hovered above His head. And beyond this was drawn the three Wise Men offering their gifts to the Child; and still farther along the walls, by the windows, were two pictures of the journey into Egypt—the Holy Family sitting beside a palm tree, beneath whose roots gushed a spring of water, and the three travelers encountering robbers and fierce beasts which were fleeing before the young Christ. Another painting on the wall showed the young Jesus carrying water in His mantle and imprisoning the sunbeams in His play—pale sunbeams now, but the face of the Child was still fair and bright. And so all about the room scenes in the childhood of Jesus had been painted by the old monk Placidus, who had mixed his colors prayerfully, and covered the gray walls with pictures that showed to others his devotion and love for the Christ Child.

But the fading frescoes of Brother Placidus were not the fairest thing in the hall. Beside the low doorway that led into a little chapel, on a great pedestal of carved stone, stood a statue of the Virgin and Child, which men came

from far and near to see. No one knew the sculptor's name; but old Father Bernard, whose memory went farther back than that of any other monk at Santarem, recalled a traveler, who had fallen ill at the village inn and had been nursed back to health by the good brothers of St. Dominic in the monastery. This traveler, during his time of convalescence, had spent many hours looking at the frescoes painted by Brother Placidus, and afterwards in the quiet cloisters he sat drawing pictures, and dreaming with half-closed eyes. No one asked his name, nor did he tell it. He spoke but little, and that little with the accent of an alien. When he went away he left a piece of gold on the long table in the hall of the frescoes, and said to Bernard, a young monk then: "This gold is not so great as my gratitude. Later I send a larger measure of thanks."

After many months had passed there was found, one morning at the monastery gate, a statue of the Virgin and Child. Whence it had come no one knew. A villager spoke of hearing a heavily loaded cart pass his hut in the early morning on the road that led to the monastery, but

most of the simple folk of the town thought that the statue had been brought miraculously. Only angels, they said, could have carried so great a weight of marble over the hill roads, and indeed they felt that only angels could have carved an image of such wonderful beauty. Bernard alone suspected the real source of the gift; for he more than the other brothers had cared for the stranger, and watched him drawing in the cloisters, and he alone had received the traveler's farewell. So he told what little he knew to the prior, and the prior ordered the statue to be placed in the hall where Brother Placidus had painted. "The frescoes are fading," he said, "but the statue will keep this still the Hall of the Child."

The villagers and country folk of the district flocked to see the statue whose coming had seemed to them so mysterious, and they spoke to one another about it in tones of awe. "Wonderful! Wonderful!" they whispered. "The Blessed Mother looks as if she were about to speak to the Child."

"But the Child," said a woman, "is as real as my own

little Francis. St. Luke must have made the image in heaven and sent it down by the angels."

And so when people spoke of the Hall of the Child in the old monastery of Santarem, they thought not so much of the delicate, pale frescoes of Brother Placidus as of the beautiful statue of the Child and His Mother which had been found at the convent gates in the early dawn.

Of all those who felt and loved the divine beauty in the face of the sculptured Child, none looked upon it so often during the quietly passing years as did Bernard; for the Hall of the Child was, in a sense, his workroom. It was here, after he had performed his daily mass, that he brought the young acolytes and instructed them. Day after day they ate their simple meals at the long table under the windows; day after day the young boys studied here, learning from Father Bernard what their heads could hold of the old monk's wisdom and learning. And sometimes their fathers came to see them there, bringing gifts to the monks—fruits and vegetables, and occasionally a sheep or cheese or a basket of fish. Here, too, the boys

were allowed to play while Bernard, seated on a stone bench against the wall, read his devotions, often lifting his eyes from his book to look upon the fair statue opposite him. The face of the Holy Child, pictured all around him and imaged with intimate semblance of life in the statue, became more real to him than the faces of his pupils. For the boys whom he taught grew to maturity and passed out of his life, and new ones came to take their places; but the Child, the little Jesus, was always there unchanged. As the years slipped by, unmarked save that Bernard's upright figure grew bent, his step slow, his eyes a little dim, his meditations before the statue grew longer. And sometimes, while he sat thus in devout abstraction, if one of the boys spoke to him he would not answer, not hearing the question, as it seemed, so rapt in thought was the old monk, so intent his gaze on the face of the Child. And the boys would go to the far end of the hall and play quietly until their teacher returned to them.

Then a new prior came who, learning of these strange

scenes, said that Bernard grew too old to teach many boys, and to a younger brother was given the work of instructing them. Only two were left to the care of Bernard. These were his acolytes who assisted him at the mass—two whom the old priest loved.

Only the little group of three now studied and ate and lived in the Hall of the Child. Often strangers came to see the beautiful statue, but none loved it as did Bernard and his two young pupils, who lived with it in daily companionship. So familiar was the image of the young Jesus to them that His face seemed like the face of one of their fellows, and they felt that there were not three who spent the days in that hall, but five—the two boys, Bernard, the Virgin Mother, and the little Jesus.

"When I am older," said one of the boys, who spent more time in drawing than in study, "I, too, shall make a beautiful Madonna and Child—not a statue, but a painting."

"Nay, then, Bartholomeo," said his companion, "if thou wouldst make as great a one as this, thou must

see what Father Bernard says the maker of the statue saw."

"In truth, Julian, I know the tale," said the young artist. "Father Bernard believes that the old sculptor, dreaming here in the cloister, saw the Christ Child and spoke with Him face to face, and so was able to make an image of Him more beautiful than any other."

Bernard coming quietly down the hall heard them, and said gently, "I will pray the Christ that such a vision may come to thee, my son," and he passed on into the chapel.

That night, at the evening meal, a third boy joined them at the table—a little child, fair and gentle. Bernard and the two boys, already seated, glanced at the statue, dimly seen at the other end of the room in the flickering candle light. When they saw that the arms of the Virgin were empty they were not surprised, so natural was it to them that the Christ Child, who had seemed to watch them at their work and their play, should Himself come to join them as they sat at table.



He sat opposite to Bernard, talking as if He, too, were one of the monk's pupils; and after the meal was over He played with Bartholomeo and Julian as they ran lightly about the hall. The servants coming to clear away the remains of the meal saw the strange boy, but did not notice that the Child of the image had become the living playfellow of the two acolytes.

Many times after this the Child came to the three. During the day Bartholomeo spent the hours drawing again and again the face of the young Jesus, while Julian looked on; and Bernard spent more and more time in meditation before the statue, as if the things of life were no longer of any moment to him. And day after day, when twilight fell, the Christ Child came, and talked with Bernard and played about the hall with the two boys.

The servants, seeing a strange child so often there, looked at Him with disfavor as one who came to the meal but contributed nothing to the convent table. At last an old servant spoke to Him: "How is it that thou comest here always at the supper hour, and yet bringest

nothing? The fathers of these boys bring their contributions of food. Why dost thou bring naught from thy father's table?"

"My Father's table is ever ready for those who will go to Him," said the Child. "On the morrow shall the good Bernard, who hath long desired it, come with Me to the house of My Father."

In the early morning Bernard and his acolytes passed through the Hall of the Child on their way to the little chapel. Bernard paused a moment before the statue, looking reverently upon the young Christ's face. Then suddenly he stood upon the pedestal and kissed the Christ Child's brow. The Child descended and, taking the old monk's hand, went with him to the altar.

Long after the breakfast hour the prior, finding the hall vacant where Bernard and his pupils used to sit, went into the chapel. Bernard and his acolytes were kneeling at the altar steps; and when the prior spoke Bernard's name. the two boys started as from a dream, but Bernard neither moved nor answered. The prior touched the gray head

with his hand; then, with eyes bent upon the ground, he went back into the Hall of the Child.

The food on the table was untouched. "Bernard feasts at a heavenly table," said the prior to himself, as he summoned the monks together.

In the hall they dug a grave beneath the flagstones, and there laid the body of Bernard. Above the unmarked stone stood the fair statue of the Child resting on His Mother's arm.

THE VIRGIN'S LULLABY

(*An Old English Song*)

Thys ender nyght [1]
I saw a syght,
 A star as bright as day;
And ever among
A maydyn song:
 By-by, baby, lullay!

Thys vyrgyn clere
Wythowtyn pere
 Unto hur son gane say:
"My son, my lorde,
My fathere dere,
 Why lyest thow in hay?

THE VIRGIN'S LULLABY

"Methynk by ryght
Thow, kyng and knyght,
 Shulde lye in ryche aray,
Yet none the lesse
I wyll not cease
 To syng, By-by, lullay!"

Thys babe full bayne [2]
Aunsweryd agayne,
 And thus, methought, he sayd:
"I am a kyng
Above all thyng,
 Yn hay yff I be layde;

"For ye shall see
That kyngs thre
 Shall cum on the twelfe day.
For thys behest
Geffe me thy brest
 And sing, By-by, lullay!"

THE VIRGIN'S LULLABY

" My son, I say,
Wythowtyn nay
 Thou art my derling dere;
I shall the kepe
Whyle thow dost slepe
 And make the goode chere;

" And all thy wylle
I wyll fulfill,
 Thou wotyst hyt well yn fay.[3]
Yet more then thys—
I wyll the kys
 And syng, By-by, lullay! "

" My moder swete,
When I have slepe,
 Then take me up on lofte;
Upon your kne
That ye sett me
 And dandell me full soft;

THE VIRGIN'S LULLABY

"And in your arme
Lap me ryght warme
 And kepe me nyght and day;
And yff I wepe
And cannott slepe,
 Syng, By, baby, lullay!"

My son, my lorde,
My fader dere,
 Syth all ys at thy wyll,
I pray the, son,
Graunte me a bone,[4]
 Yff hyt be ryght and skylle;[5]

"That chylde or man,
Whoever can
 Be mery on thys day,
To blys them bryng
And I shall syng:
 By-by, baby, lullay!"

THE VIRGIN'S LULLABY

" My moder shene,[6]
Of hevyn quene,
 Your askyng shall I spede.
So that the myrth
Dysplease me nott
 Yn wordes nor in dede.

" Syng what ye wyll,
So ye fullfyll
 My ten commaundments, ay.
Yow for to please
Let them nott sesse
 To syng, baby, lullay! "

[1] the other night [2] readily [3] in faith [4] boon [5] proper [6] bright

THE CHILD AT THE FORD

In a far-off country lived a king's son who was stronger than any soldier in his royal father's army, stronger than the workmen who placed the heavy stones in the great towers and walls which the king built to defend his country, stronger than all the strangers who came to the court with messages from distant lands. And because of this power to lift and carry heavy burdens the young prince was called Opherus, the "Bearer."

Always Opherus would ask these strangers the same question: "Is there any in thy country as strong as I?"

And the travelers from Greece laughed, "Nay, none; unless it were Hercules in the old days; but he is no more."

And the fair-haired men from the far north-country answered: "There be none so strong as thou, unless Thor should come again."

And the keen-eyed soldiers from falling Rome replied with inward shame: "Milo and his fellows dwell no

longer on the seven hills. Seek your master in the provinces. We have not seen him."

Opherus turned away from these replies with proud heart and lofty scorn. "I am the strongest. There is none whom I fear. I am the equal of the very gods of these people who come from every land. And yet—and yet, what means my mother when she says that she has heard of one mightier than I? A 'King of Kings,' he is called; he is stronger than the whole world and knows not fear. Thus has the queen heard. I must find if there be one who fears no other, and him only will I serve."

Opherus set out on his quest. He passed through his father's kingdom and questioned the rulers of the villages and towns and cities: "Where is the strongest man in the world? I wish to serve him."

The loyal subjects, not recognizing their prince in the dusty traveler before them, answered: "'Tis Opherus, our King's son. Hast thou not heard of him?"

"Yea," Opherus replied, looking down on them from his great height, "and have seen him, too. He is no



stronger than I am. But I have heard of a king whose surpassing strength keeps even fear an outcast from his kingdom. Canst tell me aught of him?"

They shook their heads. "Thou talkest boastfully. Prince Opherus, who will be our king one day, has no equal. 'Tis he will exile fear from our country when he comes to the throne. Thou dost not well to speak lightly of him."

Smiling at their dark looks and rejoicing over the stories of his own prowess, Opherus crossed the borders of his loyal country and went into foreign lands.

In the dense forests through which his wanderings led him, he crushed with his strong arms the wild beasts which attacked him. He uprooted great trees and threw them across the deep, swift streams, and over these rude bridges he passed on into other countries lying farther and farther away. If robbers rushed upon him he slew them, sweeping them down with his huge gnarled club as easily as a mower with his scythe lays low the ranks of grain. And never did he find any man whom he might call his master.

With the old question on his lips, he crossed the seas

with merchants in their vessels, and passed over deserts with slow caravans, and traveled afoot down the highways of the world. And finding countries at war he learned that now this nation had the victory and now that one, and ever the kings bulwarked themselves with castles and walls and armored soldiers for fear that their neighbors might prove mightier than they.

At last, when he had traveled countless miles, he came to a vast crumbling wall upon which the soldiers walked leisurely to and fro as if on a holiday. Questioned by one of them Opherus explained: "I seek the strongest king in the world, that I may serve him."

"Come within, then," cried the soldier. "The king of this land has never known defeat. No enemy dares approach the walls, and fear is an outcast from the kingdom."

Opherus entered gladly and was led before a white-haired king.

"Invincible king!" said Opherus, towering before the throne, "I have sworn to serve only the strongest, the one

who knows not fear. Thou art he. Wilt thou accept my service?"

The king, admiring the stranger's giant form and fearless gaze, accepted his service and placed him beside the throne; and there Opherus stood day after day, rejoicing in a master worthy of his strength.

But one day there came to the court a man of speech unknown to Opherus. The stranger spoke before the king with fiery zeal. What he said Opherus could not understand, but he saw the monarch cower in his high seat, and presently lead the stranger into a room apart. For many days no one saw the king.

Opherus stood beside the vacant throne with hot scorn in his heart. "The king fears, the king fears! What does this strange man with the wild eyes say to him?"

One night Opherus went boldly in to the terror-stricken monarch. "King," he cried, "thou fearest. A man has come here with strange words on his lips, and thou tremblest before him. I could kill him with one blow of my hand. What is it thou dost fear?"

"The Prince of Evil," answered the pale king. "All my life have I waged ruthless war and oppressed foreign peoples that I might make my throne invincible. And lo! the time is at hand when I, the great king, must pay tribute to one mightier than I—the unseen monarch in whose cause I have served but whose mastery I did not acknowledge until this stranger showed me how evil had been my life. And now the Prince of Evil calls me in the whirlwinds, in the thunder and the darkness; and the voices of downtrodden nations cry out against me. The lightning flashes are like swords dripping with blood—the blood of those whom I and my soldiers have slain. Darkness covers me, and I fear the Prince of Evil who has mastered me and drags me to his kingdom. I fear—I fear!"

Opherus watched the king with wonder. "Thou art a child to fear the storms," he said.

"Nay," answered the king, "in spite of thy great body, 'tis thou art a child. Thou dost not understand these things. One day thy strength alone will not suffice thee."

"My strength bears all burdens lightly; I am Opherus,

the "Bearer." My heart neither knows fear nor will ever know it. I pass on, O faint-hearted king, to seek that Prince of Evil who is mightier than thou."

Again Prince Opherus set out on his quest, and coming one day to the top of a bleak mountain, he saw a wide, dark valley opening out before him. Through this valley marched a mighty army; rank after rank filed along with glittering weapons and blood-stained banners. In the rear, surrounded by men in black armor, rode a warrior in a heavy chariot. He, too, was clad in black armor, and about his head was a crown of jewels that gleamed like baleful fires.

Opherus walked boldly down the mountain side as the army marched along, and presented himself to the commander of the host and said: "Never have I seen so mighty an army as this. Of what nation is it?"

"It is of the Kingdom of Darkness," answered the proud warrior, "and I am the ruler, Satan, Prince of Evil."

"I have traveled many miles to enter thy service," said Opherus simply, "because thou art the mightiest of all

monarchs, and I will serve none but the mightiest and him who knows not fear."

Satan laughed as he received Opherus into his company, saying: "Thy strength will serve me well. There is work to do, work to do!"

The army marched forward destroying whole peoples and ever adding to its ranks, and left the lands which it harried barren and dry.

One day when the Prince of Evil was leading his army among the hills, suddenly they came upon a fair city. Among its close-built houses rose a lofty spire on whose summit gleamed a golden cross.

"Back!" cried the dark prince with a voice of terror. And the army, seeing the bright cross, turned and fled.

"Strange," muttered Opherus, left standing alone on the slope above the city. "The king whom I served feared the Prince of Evil, and this same prince fears yonder gleaming jewel whose name I do not know. There must be one mightier than the Prince of Evil—a king, perchance, in this fair city. I will seek him out."

So Opherus went toward the city, and on the road met an old man dressed like that stranger who once visited the king in his palace, and brought fear to his heart. On the old man's breast was a cross.

Opherus addressed himself to the hermit: "I have marched with the Prince of Evil, who seemed mightier than all the world; but when he saw yonder starlike figure" (his hand pointed to the cross on the spire) "this proud leader and his army turned and fled."

"It is not strange that they fled," the hermit answered with serene conviction. "There is a King—a King of Kings—who is mightier than all others, and of His kingdom there shall be no end. The Prince of Evil fears even His symbol, the cross which shines yonder on His temple."

"Where lives this great King?" asked Opherus eagerly. "I have sworn to serve only the mightiest and I would enter the army of this King of the Cross."

"Be not in haste, my son," said the hermit quietly. "This King differs from all others. Thou must serve Him first with prayer and fasting; and when thy heart is puri-

fied, then thou mayest know this King, whose name is Jesus Christ."

"This is not service," cried Opherus impatiently. "I know not what thou meanest by prayer, and as for fasting —that diminishes my strength, and my strength is the tribute which I bring the King."

So the hermit, looking upon the great height of the man before him, and pondering a moment, gave him a task. "Over yonder river," he said, "all travelers must pass. Often they are carried away by the dangerous current as they ford the stream. If thou dost stand on the bank and carry the people across, thou wilt be serving Christ. He will know of thy service, and in time thou shalt see Him. Thou art not afraid of the swift current?"

"Afraid!" cried Opherus. "I have never met Fear nor think to find him at the ford."

Opherus built himself a hut beside the stream, and uprooting a tall palm tree, he stripped it of bark and leaves that he might have a staff to guide his feet among the rocks of the river bed. And those journeying to and from the

city found him always at the door of his hut, waiting to carry them across. When the stream was low the fording was easy enough; but in time of flood men feared the black water.

One would cry: "Art thou sure, O Opherus, that thy strength can withstand the strong current?"

And another would falter: "Art thou not afraid of the great waves, thou Bearer at the Ford?"

But Opherus, lifting them on his broad shoulders, laughed so loud that the echo floated back from the hills and rang above the sound of the roaring waters; and crossing the hazardous ford easily, he set down his burden on the opposite bank.

One day, when a storm was rising, a child came to the hut asking to be carried across. Opherus knelt so that he might speak to the boy.

"A storm comes on," the Bearer said. "If I set thee down on yonder bank, thou wilt lose thy way in the dark woodland paths and the storm will frighten and perhaps harm thee, thou deep-eyed child!"

The child smiled at Opherus with steadfast gaze, and reaching up his hands, said: "Come, my bearer!"

"As thou wilt," replied the simple-hearted giant. "'Tis not for myself I fear the storm." He swung the child lightly to his shoulder, holding him steady with one great hand.

The storm broke as they entered the stream, and as Opherus advanced with his light burden, the waves lashed about him. The child grew heavy. Opherus, troubled, looked wonderingly at him, but the bright-haired boy gazed over the angry waves unmoved. The burden grew heavier and heavier. Opherus stumbled, his knees trembled, and his heart was filled with he knew not what.

"This strange feeling—is it fear?" he asked himself. "This heavy weight that bows me down—whence comes it?" He stumbled on. "The king said true, my strength is not sufficient. I stumble, I fall! Thou little child," he gasped, "cling to my staff. Mayhap it will float thee and thou wilt be saved!"

The child stretched out his hand, and the waves ceased



to beat against them. The force of the current diminished, and the footing grew secure.

Opherus set down the child on the sand. "I have boasted of my strength and my courage," he said humbly. "Thou, a child, hast weighed me down till I could hardly stand, and fear came into my heart. Thou art mightier than any I have met—the waves obey thy hand; and thou knowest not fear, even in the face of death. Who art thou?"

"I am the King of Kings," was the answer. "Dost thou not know thy master? With thy strength hast thou already served me, helping those less able than thyself. With thy heart and mind also shalt thou learn to serve; the good hermit will teach thee. And because thou hast borne thy Christ and His burden of the world's sins across this river of death, thou shalt no longer be called Opherus the Bearer, but Christopherus, the Christ Bearer. Give me thy staff, my bearer of others' burdens!"

Christopherus, bending humbly, gave his smooth staff into the hand of the Child, who thrust its point into the

sand. Suddenly from the top sprang out leaves full and glossy, and heavy clusters of dates drooped from its crown. The Christ Child had vanished.

Christopherus sat beneath the luxuriant tree looking out over the quiet waters. "I do not understand it all," he said with humility; "but this, at least, I know—that I serve the great King, my King, in carrying a little child across the ford."

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